

**THE MOVEMENT FOR THE REFORMATION OF MANNERS, 1688-1715**

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**1980 (reset and digitally formatted 2015)**

## **PREFACE TO THE 2015 VERSION**

This study was completed in the pre-digital era and since then has been relatively inaccessible to researchers. To help rectify that, the 1980 typescript submitted for the degree of PhD from Edinburgh University has been reset and formatted in Microsoft “Word” and Arial 12pt as an easily readable font and then converted to a read-only PDF file for circulation. It is now more compact than the original typescript version and fully searchable.

Some minor typographical errors have been corrected but no material published post-1980 has been added except in the postscript (see below). Pagination in the present version does not correspond to the original because of computerised resetting of the text. Footnotes in this version are consecutive throughout, rather than chapter by chapter as required in the 1980 version.

The original bound copy is lodged in Edinburgh University Library. A PDF scan of it is available at <https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/6840/254333.pdf>

A further hand-corrected copy is available together with my research archive in the Special Collections Department at St Andrews University Library. <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/library/specialcollections/>

A note for researchers interested in the movement for the reformation of manners 1688-1715 and afterwards has been added as a postscript which lists other studies which have utilised this work and its sources in various ways.

I am grateful to the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland for its generous scholarship support while a research student at Edinburgh University undertaking this study in the 1970s and to the following for their encouragement, guidance and support during the creation and completion of this research.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS USED IN FOOTNOTES**

BL - British Library

EUL - Edinburgh University Library

Bodl. - Bodleian Library, Oxford University

Lambeth - Lambeth Palace Library, London

Guildhall - Guildhall Library, London

MRO - Middlesex Record Office, London

PRO - Public Record Office, London

Folger - Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington D. C.

Add. MS - Additional Manuscript. (various collections)

Bray MSS - Manuscripts of the Rev. Thomas Bray, Sion College Library, London

Bristol MS - Bristol Central Library MS BL 611 B10162, 'Minutes of the Bristol Society for Reformation of Manners'

SPCK Archives - Original and abstract correspondence to and from the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, SPCK Library, London

Wanley MSS - Correspondence of Humfrey Wanley, SPCK Library, London

Vernon Letters - G. P. R. James ed., *Letters Illustrative of the Reign of William III, from 1696 to 1708 addressed to the Duke of Shrewsbury by James Vernon, Secretary of State* (1841), vol. II.

SPCK Papers of Moment – 'Papers of Moment MSS' in SPCK Library, London

Wake Papers - Papers of Archbishop of Canterbury William Wake, Christ Church Library, Oxford.

Sharp Papers - Papers of Archbishop John Sharp of York, Lloyd-Baker-Sharp MSS, Gloucester Record Office.

Bulkeley Papers - Papers of Sir Richard Bulkeley, Portland MSS, Nottingham University Library.

BL Loan 29 - Papers. of the Harley Family, Portland MSS, Loan 29, British Library

CSPD - Calendar of State Papers Domestic

EHR - English Historical Review

HLQ - Huntington Library Quarterly

DNB - Dictionary of National Biography

PMLA - Proceedings of the Modern Language Association

### **Dates, Spelling and Punctuation**

Dates are given throughout in Old Style, though assuming the year to begin on 1 January and not 25 March. Spelling and punctuation have been modernised in quoted material throughout. Archaisms have occasionally been retained in footnotes for bibliographical reasons.

### **Footnote style**

Sequential footnotes give author where known, title, date of publication, and page reference. Second and subsequent citations give author's name and/or key title word plus page reference. London is the place of publication unless indicated.

### **THESIS ABSTRACT (from the 1980 original version)**

Previously unused manuscript sources and printed sources form the basis for an examination of the motivations, tactics and interactions with existing institutions of the participants in the movement for reformation of manners. Their providential and patriarchal beliefs are highlighted within the 1688 to 1715 period, whose climate of uncertainty and fear were crucial to sharpening the reformers' sense of urgency to achieve a more effective enforcement of secular laws against immorality and profaneness and thus ensure England's survival against foreign and domestic enemies.

Founding members of the First Society for Reformation of Manners in London are identified, as well as their allies among the Anglican religious societies and elsewhere. Opposition to the ad hoc reforming societies from the capital's judicial establishment is analysed. The movement's efforts against sexual immoralities, swearing and cursing, and Sabbath-breaking are catalogued, together with attempts to suppress Bartholomew Fair and London's homosexual population.

Sermons preached to reformers of manners in London are catalogued and studied for the reformers' views on magistracy, the community and the family. The final chapter examines opinions about the movement held by civil authorities, the Anglican leadership and champions of the High Church party, since reformation of manners became an element in the 'rage of party' in church and state.

The conclusion places the movement for reformation of manners as one strand composing 'country ideology', a pervasive historical attitude in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries decrying any unbalancing of the constitution of the commonweal whether by immoralities, hypocrisy or political expediency.

## INTRODUCTION

### THE CONCEPT OF 'MANNERS' IN LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND

The word 'manners' in late seventeenth century English usage connoted much more than social graces. Modern usage has long departed from the sociological meaning of 'manners' inherent in dicta such as William of Wykeham's '*manners maketh man*'. But such an axiom would have been crystal clear to men seeking a reformation of manners in England after 1688. They would, ironically, have agreed with Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* (1651, chap XI) that 'manners' meant not merely '*decency of behaviour but those qualities of mankind that concern their living together in peace and unity*'.

The social fabric and each person's tangible estate within it depended on acknowledged codes of behaviour validated by the Christian religion's unimpeachable moral tenets. Good manners were synonymous with correct behaviour in this context and it was the divinely sanctioned role of the righteous magistrate, from the monarch down to the local justice of the peace, to maintain the standards of behaviour conducive to good manners.

In a hierarchical society whose levels were linked by deferential obligations (subject to ruler, man to master, child to parent), corrupt manners could not be tolerated if the principle of social subordination was to survive intact. This was as true of the government of the household as of the government of the nation. Literature of the period abounded in the argument that unchecked corrupt manners such as blasphemy, drunkenness, prostitution or Sabbath-breaking contributed to social disharmony and the dissolution of the ties binding together families as well as communities.<sup>1</sup>

Toleration of deviant behaviour in any modern or 'liberal' sense was quite alien to patterns of thought in the late seventeenth century as expressed in the words and actions of those associated with the reformation of manners movement. England was in peril both at home and abroad after 1688 and Shakespeare's warning in *Henry IV, pt. 1* that '*defect of manners*' led to '*want of government*' derived literal meaning from daily events. The intertwining of hope and fear which characterises the English experience in the years from 1688 to the death of Queen Anne stemmed less from the changes - few in fact - occasioned by the departure of James II and the assumption of power by William and Mary, than from the international struggle of unprecedented scope and expense against Catholic France which formed the backcloth to England's domestic events. The dimension of war added the potent fuel of fear to the debate surrounding the Revolution's true nature and the practical means by which allegiances could be switched from one ruler to another without endangering the principles of subordination and submission to authority upon which

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<sup>1</sup> C. J. Somerville, *Popular Religious Literature in England, 1160-1711: A Content Analysis* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Iowa, 1970), *passim*.

society itself rested.<sup>2</sup> The struggle of factions and personalities in the political arena after 1688 produced a 'divided nation' in the body politic as well as further down the social scale.<sup>3</sup> There was a parallel 'rage of party' within the clerical world as well because, much as it was longed for, the Revolution of 1688 did not produce a settled picture of Church and State working harmoniously together in the maintenance of a society characterised by uniformity of belief and obedience to authority.<sup>4</sup>

The practical identification between Christian belief and the correct behaviour of sound manners was also under threat during the 1690s from other quarters. Many preachers and devout laymen such as the diarist John Evelyn bemoaned falling standards of church attendance. The social control function of church courts was perceptibly waning and Christian dogma was being assaulted by philosophical rationalism as well as more scurrilous outpourings from the presses.<sup>5</sup>

Faced with internal divisions and foreign threats, there was one refuge available to those of a patriotic mind who sought justification for a practical programme seeking both domestic harmony and military success. This was to attribute the events of 1688 to the intervention of divine Providence. From Elizabethan times the belief had grown up of the 'special relationship' between England and Providence. Just as the nation had once been delivered from the Armada of Catholic Spain, so in 1688 with James II's flight God has intervened once again to deliver it from the clutches of Stuart Popery. It followed, therefore, that William of Orange must be the agent for this deliverance and that God's intentions would only be fulfilled by a successful outcome to the struggle against Catholic France.<sup>6</sup>

This providential perspective was above party and allowed practical steps to be taken to ensure that what God had begun with his 'Protestant wind', England's corrupt manners would not be allowed to thwart. For reformers of manners, the appearance of William and Mary was visible evidence of God's concern to save England and restore her civil and religious life to the glories of former times. An obvious outlet for the energies of such 'moral patriots' was the system of social control operating at the fundamental parish level of society. Its shortcomings were notorious encouragements to 'corrupt manners' since the lay magistracy, parochial

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<sup>2</sup> G. S. Holmes, *Religion and Party in late Stuart England* (1975) and *The Trial of Doctor Sacheverell* 1973, chap. 2, see also H. T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property: Political Ideology in Eighteenth Century Britain*, chap. 1.

<sup>3</sup> G. S. Holmes and W. A. Speck, *The Divided Society: Parties and Politics in England, 1694-1716* (1967); Speck, 'Conflict in Society' in Holmes, ed., *Britain After the Glorious Revolution, 1689-1714* (1969); also J. P. Kenyon, *Revolution Principles: The Politics of Party, 1689-1720* (Cambridge, 1978)

<sup>4</sup> L. J. Trinterud, 'A. D. 1689: The End of the Clerical World' in *Theology in Sixteenth and Seventeenth England* (Los Angeles, 1971); G.V Bennett, 'Conflict in the Church in G. S. Holmes, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-175.

<sup>5</sup> G. S. Holmes, *Religion and Party and Trial of Doctor Sacheverell*, chap. 2, *passim*; G. V. Bennett, *The Tory-Crisis in Church and State 1688 – 1730* (Oxford, 1975), *passim*; Pickering, 'Who goes to Church?' in C. L. Mitton ed., *The Social Sciences and the Churches* (1972) pp. 181-197.

<sup>6</sup> G. M. Straka, *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688* (Madison, 1962), esp. chaps. 5 and 6; and Straka, 'The Final Phase of Devine Right Theory in England, 1688-1702', *EHR*, 77 (1962), pp. 638-58. For background see Paul A. Jorgensen, 'Elizabethan Religious Literature in Time of War' *HLQ*, 37 (1973), pp. 1-17; and Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1973), chap. 4 *passim*.

officers and the usually cumbersome ecclesiastical courts were inadequate to the task of detection and enforcement set for them by the existing laws embodying standards of behaviour and official observance, for instance on Sundays.<sup>7</sup>

Inadequate means of enforcement bred disregard for the law and the situation was made worse by the hypocrisy of the rich and powerful who might be quick to acknowledge the value of sound manners as necessary 'social cement' but took advantage of lax enforcement to pursue their own pleasures.<sup>8</sup>

Such an analysis coupled with a providential interpretation of political events in 1688 provided the initial driving force for a programme of social intervention to achieve more effective law enforcement in London to which can be given the name 'a movement for the reformation of manners'.

Words alone were insufficient. For the stock of national virtue to be increased and thus form a bulwark against both domestic and foreign threats, sound manners would have to have visible expression at all levels of society. Only then would a climate of social harmony and Christian piety prevail making England worthy of God's continued special care. In this study of the activities of reformation-minded men organised in societies to better achieve their objectives, the principal concentration will be on London and its environs where the movement had its genesis. Provincial evidence will be included to illustrate specific points where appropriate since space and available evidence does not permit a nationwide survey of reformation of manners sentiment and activities.

Little has been written on the reformation of manners phenomenon and most of what does exist is inadequately based on the manuscript and primary printed sources. David Ogg's general survey of *England in the Reigns of James II and William III* viewed the late seventeenth century in England as an 'adolescent society' gearing up for future commercial greatness and political sophistication. From this developmental perspective, Ogg viewed the reformers of manners as progenitors of the voluntary societies for political reform and social improvement of the next century.<sup>9</sup> But there was a fundamental difference between 'reformation' as understood by members of reforming societies after 1688 and 'reform' as understood by a late eighteenth century philanthropist. Those intent on defending the Revolution of 1688 by a visible enforcement of the laws against immoralities had no wish to create some new social order. They sought rather to recover the best practices in government and belief which had once made England great but which in the hands of the Stuarts suffered

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<sup>7</sup> J. Bond, *Compleat Guide for a Justice of the Peace* (2nd. ed., 1699); for the JPs at work see Cockburn, *The Work of the North Riding Quarter Sessions in the early Eighteenth Century*, (unpublished LL. M. thesis, Leeds University, 1961), *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> See the argument at length in John Disney, *An Essay upon the Execution of the Laws against Immorality and Prophaneness*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1710 and his *Address to Grand Juries, Constables and Church Wardens* (1710).

<sup>9</sup> Oxford, 1955: chap. 4, *passim*.



perversion. The idea of circularity - not "progress" - marked their understanding of nature just as it did the events of late 1688.<sup>10</sup>

A later study than Ogg's by Dudley Bahlman examined the reformation of manners movement in more depth, but perpetuated the notion that it presaged the creation of friendly societies and other philanthropic efforts in the eighteenth century. Bahlman's *Moral Revolution of 1688* saw the reformation of manners efforts after 1688 as 'doomed to failure' as the first casualties of a 'projecting age' and he thus made little effort to penetrate the ideological principles underlying the social tactics of the reformers.<sup>11</sup>

For an attempt at such an analysis, one must consult the older (1912) study by G. V. Portus.<sup>12</sup> His *Caritas Anglicana* seriously examined the known manuscript evidence but his approach reflected his personal commitment to Anglicanism and the religious aspect of reformation activities was given chief place. Insufficient attention was paid to the embodiment of social control mechanisms in religious forms and observances and the larger political scene was neglected. Though of lasting value, Portus's book failed to penetrate the religious gloss which covers so much of the thought and action of figures in late seventeenth century England.

The most recently published attempt to grapple with the reformation of manners phenomenon was the 1976 article by W. A. Speck and T. C. Curtis.<sup>13</sup> Though it clarified several hitherto ambiguous points concerning the activities of reforming groups in London and linked these to the known printed sources, the study was basically reductionist. It focused on the mechanics of law enforcement and attempted to assess the movement's level of success. What it could not do in a limited space was to relate political events, to ideological principles to law enforcement endeavours over a time span. The present study does attempt this longer perspective and incorporates a considerable amount of previously unknown manuscript and printed source evidence.

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<sup>10</sup> The nature of the early debate on the Revolution is described by J. P. Kenyon, 'The Revolution of 1688: Resistance and Contract' in Neil McKendrick ed., *Historical Perspectives* (1974), 43-69; see also Angus McInnes, 'The Revolution and the People' in Holmes ed., *Britain After the Glorious Revolution*, pp. 80-95.

<sup>11</sup> New Haven, 1957: p. 100ff.

<sup>12</sup> *Caritas Anglicana, or an Historical Inquiry into those Religious and Philanthropical Societies that Flourished in England between 1678 and 1714*, (1912); See also F.W.B. Bullock, *Voluntary Religious Societies, 1520-1799* (St. Leonard's on Sea, 1963).

<sup>13</sup> 'The Societies for the Reformation of Manners: A Case Study in the Theory and Practice of Moral Reform', *Literature and History*, No. 3 (1976), 45-64.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE LONDON GENESIS: MEN AND EVENTS

Disparate strands of evidence are brought together in this chapter to give coherence and depth to the well-known fact that the London societies for reformation of manners had their origins in the early years of William and Mary's reign. The founders of the First Society for Reformation of Manners are identified and their efforts to secure royal approval are traced. Independent attacks on vice in the Tower Hamlets area are also investigated and the interaction of this local initiative with the larger plans of the gentlemen reformers and their friends are explained. Early reactions to the movement for reformation of manners in the press are also included.

It is not possible to isolate one seminal conjunction of men, ideas and events from which flowed the movement for reformation of manners and the reforming societies it spawned. What is possible, however, is to identify within a fairly narrow time span following the flight of James II and the accession to the throne of William of Orange and James's eldest daughter Mary, several strands which, in retrospect, are necessarily related by their objectives of improvement of moral standards through law enforcement.

Individuals who became prominent reformers of manners will be examined first, including Sir Richard Bulkeley, Edward Stephens, Col. Maynard Colchester, William Yates of Lincoln's Inn, and their friends at Court such as the Bishop of Worcester, Edward Stillingfleet. Interwoven with them must also be an examination of the apparently spontaneous popular effort to suppress immorality in the Tower Hamlets district of riverside East London. This was an unlikely setting for reformation, being more noted for its inhabitants' boisterous support for Shaftesbury's 'brisk Protestant boys' during the Exclusion Crisis than for fervour against prostitutes and thieves. What happened in this area of London, though, was crucial to the spread of the impulse to found reforming societies elsewhere in the capital.

It is possible to detect two future reformation leaders in action very soon after the arrival of William and Mary. Sir Richard Bulkeley was a baronet with Irish estates and a reputation for practical philanthropy stemming from his sincere Christian belief.<sup>14</sup> He would soon be a founder of the First Society for Reformation of Manners in 1691, but immediately after the arrival of William and Mary he was urging on the new rulers schemes for social improvement of a different sort. Queen Mary was urged by Bulkeley to use the revenues from quitrents and a reformed patronage system to establish free schools, apprenticeships, sheltered workhouses, and benevolent funds for broken tradesmen and poor young women needing marriage portions. The education of poor children was also close to Sir Richard's heart and his writings abound with plans for their training in reading, writing, scripture and reverence for

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<sup>14</sup> Bulkeley lived from 1644 to 1710, see *DNB* memoir, and was MP for Fechar, Co. Wexford from 1692 onwards. He was elected to the Royal Society and contributed to its *Transactions*.

authority which would fit them to be useful members of the hierarchical and deferential social order in which they lived. Otherwise, Bulkeley argued, destitution would lead them into crime and this would cost the community far more than their educational provision.<sup>15</sup> It is interesting to note that this impulse, which would later blossom in the foundation of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the charity school movement, was prominent in the plans of a man who would take a leading role in the reformation of manners movement.

Besides these long-term remedies for his diagnosis of England's national health, Bulkeley urged William and Mary to adopt more immediate measures to correct the corruptions of cursing, swearing and public drunkenness. He penned a draft proclamation on the subject with an eye no doubt on the grave military situation facing the new regime, especially in Ireland, during 1689 and urged official action so that '*we may prevent those grievous judgements which our crying sins and wickedness do justly deserve*'. In the draft proclamation Bulkeley rehearsed a pro-revolution thesis that Providence had shown England a singular mercy in rescuing her from popery and slavery by sending William of Orange to restore the nation's true Protestant religion and liberties. But, continued the document, the nation remained ungrateful for its deliverance and the new monarchs' mission was thus imperilled.<sup>16</sup>

As an antidote to God's displeasure, Sir Richard urged days of fasting and humiliation. But to this must be added positive measures to reform permanently '*that detestable sin of cursing and profane swearing and blaspheming the most High and Holy Name of God and of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ...*' This sin, the draft proclamation alleged, was widespread through all social ranks, and particularly notorious in the Army. Loose morals to Bulkeley's way of thinking were a clear and present danger to the effectiveness of England's men-at-arms since God could hardly be expected to favour a commander whose men were addicted to oaths and blasphemy. Even more than drunkenness and other debaucheries, Bulkeley believed cursing and swearing were the greatest threat to England's 'special relationship' with the Almighty. All the more so, since ample legislation existed to control the vice and needed only the will of the authorities for its enforcement. The message was implicit: those charged with law enforcement would not be held guiltless by God if such sins went unreformed.

The thoughts and activities of Edward Stephens around the time of William's descent on England presaged his later involvement with the reformation of manners movement. Stephens is an elusive figure whose voluminous writings were often pseudonymous. Consequently it is tempting to dismiss him as of only passing interest in any study of reformation activities. But more careful study reveals much

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<sup>15</sup> Bulkeley Papers, PwA 2326

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, PwA 2325

about Stephens' mental world which was shared by other participants in the movement.

Born in 1633 into a prosperous Gloucestershire family, Stephens trained for the common law and became a Barrister of the Middle Temple. His family was indirectly related to the Harleys and he married a daughter of the Restoration Chief Justice, Sir Matthew Hale. His 1687 pamphlet *Relief of Apprentices wronged by their Masters* testifies to his awareness of social injustices.<sup>17</sup> Possessed of a profound sense of Christian piety and patriotism, Edward Stephens took Anglican orders late in a life spanning more than seventy years. To his mind, the principles which should guide spiritual life were the same for civil affairs. If practised by men of virtue, politics should reflect the dedication and piety which true Christians showed in their worship of God.

These were the qualities Stephens strove to reinvigorate in the nation's rulers and in the daily lives of the people.<sup>18</sup> This is why the Stuart collapse gave him such hope that at last a new leader had been provided in the person of William of Orange to lead a thorough reformation in national life and a return to piety and sound manners in church and state. Stephens' campaign to win William's ear for reformation began before the Prince reached London after his landing in November 1688.

Near Torbay, Stephens presented him with a draft *Declaration against Debauchery* hoping that this would lead to a proclamation on the subject, especially in the Forces, and inspire legislation in Parliament. This *Declaration* rehearsed the common arguments linking moral laxity with the spread of popery and political despotism. It enjoined military commanders strictly to enforce existing laws forbidding swearing, cursing, drunkenness and other excesses. England could hardly prevail in its struggle with France, Stephens wrote, if her men-at-arms were weakened in body and their souls lost to vice.<sup>19</sup>

Neither Sir Richard Bulkeley nor Edward Stephens succeeded in eliciting from England's new rulers an immediate response to their pleas for moral and social improvements. But the impulse behind their efforts is very illuminating when one considers their later involvement with the movement for reformation of manners. Both men lived through a period flooded with propaganda portraying the political implications of Catholicism. It was also a time when passions were stirred by a spasmodic debate on the origins of the English constitution and the position of the

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<sup>17</sup> His *DNB* memoir should be supplemented with *The Apology of Socrates Christianus* (2 pts., 1700) and Lambeth MS 930, No 35 (Stephens to Archbishop Tenison, 21 February 1695). See also C. E. Wright, *Fontes Harleiani* (1972), p. 315 and C. E. Doble, ed., *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne* (Oxford, 1885), 1, pp. 25, 95 and 248. More study of Stephens is needed, see A.G. Craig "The Providential Politics of Edward Stephens and the Reformed Nation" (1973, Edinburgh Post Graduate History Seminar, unpublished, now in St Andrews University Library).

<sup>18</sup> The most succinct statement of Stephens' views is *Old English Loyalty and Policy Agreeable to Primitive Christianity* (1695), *passim*.

<sup>19</sup> *Specimen of a Declaration against Debauchery, tendered to the Consideration of his Highness the Prince of Orange, and of the present Convention* (1689).

Crown within it. Their adult lives spanned the Restoration period when these two tendencies were focused not only by domestic crises such as the Popish Plot of 1678, but also by the rise of Bourbon absolutism personified by the Catholic monarch Louis XIV so admired by the crypto-Catholic Charles II and his openly papist brother James.<sup>20</sup> One should not wonder, then, at their fascination with the Revolution of 1688 and their interpretation of political events as signs of providential favour to England and her people as the successors of Israel and the Jews.

The real personalities of the protagonists mattered little to such men as Bulkeley and Stephens when set against a symbolic view of the Revolution as both a mercy from God and an admonition to Englishmen to set about a reformation of manners as the best way to show thanksgiving for deliverance from the threat of popery and slavery and to rally all patriots to the cause of the new regime of William and Mary. This is the mental world which coloured the interpretation men such as Bulkeley and Stephens gave to the appearance of the next strand of reforming initiative arising in the unlikely locale of London's Tower Hamlets.

On another and more practical level, there is a further comparison to be made between these two men which also links them to later reformation objectives. This was their invocation of civil authority (as opposed to the cumbersome machinery of ecclesiastical jurisdiction) to suppress the spreading habit of cursing and swearing. The social control implications for this were enormous, since all the most important arrangements of social intercourse, from oaths of state loyalty to the commercial world's honouring of undertakings and debts, depended on formulae invoking divine authority.<sup>21</sup>

The validity of such practices was founded on customary reverence for an individual's promise made in the sight of God. This foundation was threatened by any dilution of usage of the divine name; perjury and treason were only two more obvious consequences. Catholics were traditionally suspect on just this point in England, since it was widely believed that one trick of priests to further despotism was to absolve their followers from the obligations of loyalty oaths. Hence the axiom, which James II ignored at his peril, that papists had no place in England's political life. After the events of 1688, the spread of lax practices regarding the use of divine names was to be resisted even more since oaths of loyalty bound the nation in allegiance to William and Mary and prevented the growth of a 'fifth column' movement within it.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> For the general intellectual climate see John Miller, *Popery and Politics in England 1660-1688* (Cambridge, 1973) and J. G. A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (Cambridge, 1957); also Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth Century Commonwealthman* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), esp. chapters 1-3.

<sup>21</sup> See Caroline Robbins, 'Selden's Pills: State Oaths in England, 1558-1714', *HLQ*, 35, pp. 303-321. The distinction between swearing for sacred as opposed to profane purposes is set out by Peter Comber (Dean of Durham) in *The Nature and Usefulness of Solemn Judicial Swearing, with the Impiety and Mischief of Vain and False Swearing* (1682).

<sup>22</sup> See *Perjury the National Sin; or an Account of the Abuses and Violations of oaths among us of this Nation* (1690); B.J., *A Letter to a Gentleman of Note, Guilty of Common Swearing* (1690); J. B., *A Letter from a Gentleman in Manchester to his Friend, concerning a notorious Blasphemer* (1694).

Unless men such as Bulkeley and Stephens - and soon other reformers - spoke out against this 'crying sin' of profane swearing and cursing then, as they saw it, God would be affronted just when England should be thanking him for his mercies and the whole fabric of political and social life would be imperilled.<sup>23</sup> As an inlet to national disharmony, therefore, swearing and cursing must be resisted at all costs.

Official pronouncements in the early days after the Revolution, when they were concerned with the moral health of the country at all, displayed no departure from the laments of previous years. The writs calling Convocation in 1689 and also the commission to revise the *Book of Common Prayer*, while both commenting on the lax state of manners of some clergy and people, made no move to remedy the situation other than improving the workings of the ecclesiastical courts. A more significant statement, however, was the letter sent by King William to the Bishop of London, Henry Compton, (in lieu of the suspended Archbishop Sancroft) on 13th February 1690 for distribution to all diocesans and parish clergy. In later months, the reformers of manners would make this letter into part of their justifications for the formation of societies for law enforcement, so its examination is necessary at this stage.

As far as intending reformers of manners were concerned, what set the tone of this royal letter was its command that the bishops assist the Crown's efforts towards '*a general reformation in the lives and manners of all our subjects, as being that which must establish our throne, and secure to our people their religion, happiness, and peace; all of which seem to be in great danger at this time ...*'<sup>24</sup> Clergy were instructed to preach against immoralities and read the statutes prohibiting blasphemy, swearing and cursing, perjury, drunkenness, and profanations of the Lord's Day. Copies of the legislation were printed to be sent by the bishops to their own clergy in the parishes.<sup>25</sup> Bishop Gilbert Burnet of Salisbury, writing to his own clergy about the letters, urged them '*to warn your people frequently of the heavy judgements of God which the sins of the land give us just cause to apprehend ...*'<sup>26</sup> Other diocesans no doubt expressed similar (and no doubt familiar to parochial ears) sentiments.

Though it is impossible to ascertain if William's letter to Bishop Compton had any remedial effect on the nation's manners, it was certainly seen by some as a lead from the top in the direction of reformation. As a news writer in *Mercurius Reformatus* (II, no. 11, 19 February 1690) viewed it, '*His Majesty's letter to my Lord Bishop of London ... evinces sufficiently that the King judges it not enough to discourage vice by his example if he back it not with his precept*'. The paper went on to review the proclamations against vice and immorality of the preceding thirty years

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<sup>23</sup> *Athenian Mercury* (X, no. 8, May 1693) declared these sins a threat to '*human society and civil order*' by striking '*at the root and bond of all government which is the reverence and belief in a God ...*'

<sup>24</sup> Cardwell, *Documentary Annals of the Reformed Church*, II, pp. 326-329.

<sup>25</sup> Bishop Compton's circular letter for the London diocese is Guildhall Broadside 19.26 (24 April 1690).

<sup>26</sup> Bodl. Add. MS D. 23, Fols. 85-86 (copy).

before concluding that they were of little lasting value due to the corrupting examples seen in the lives of the great and powerful. This stress on the reforming power of good examples had real meaning in a deferential society and the reformers of manners repeatedly stressed it. The King himself echoed this when reproving a young courtier for swearing with the reminder that *'the Court should give good examples, and reformation should begin there first, and then others would follow'*.<sup>27</sup>

Surrounding the Tower of London and extending eastwards along the Thames are the boroughs known today, as in the 1690s, as Tower Hamlets: twenty one districts lying in the then parishes of Hackney, Stepney, Whitechapel, Minories, St. Katherine's, Wapping, Shadwell, Shoreditch, Norton Folgate, and Bromley. Dependent mainly on the river trade (Limehouse, Wapping, Shadwell) or manufacturing (Spittlefields, Bethnal Green), these districts were notoriously difficult to police. They were also congested both in terms of buildings and people, many of whom were transients.<sup>28</sup> The Tower Hamlets were an ideal breeding ground for crime and civil disorder, especially that connected with drunkenness and prostitution.<sup>29</sup>

A royal proclamation against highwaymen and housebreakers issued on 30 October 1690 stressed that such felons sheltered in bawdy houses, and argued that suppressing such places would aid the detection and prosecution of criminals.<sup>30</sup> This otherwise unremarkable statement seems to have sparked off a spontaneous community response within the districts resulting in the establishment of a body of *'constables, churchwardens, and other officers and inhabitants'* pledging themselves to suppress bawdy and disorderly houses and prosecute prostitutes. These associating citizens in Tower Hamlets cited as justification not only the royal proclamation against highwaymen, but also the spirit of King William's letter of February 1690 to the Bishop of London.<sup>31</sup>

An examination of the broadside recounting the agreement in the Tower Hamlets to suppress prostitution and its haunts reveals the motives of these citizens. Speaking of bawdy and disorderly houses they said

*Here it is that impudent harlots in their antic dresses, painted faces, and whorish insinuations, allure and tempt our sons and servants to debauchery, and consequently to embezzle and steal from us, to maintain their strumpets.*

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<sup>27</sup> Narcissus Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs from September 1678 to April 1714* (Oxford, 1857), II, 346 (January, 1692). For other versions on this theme see Abel Boyer, *Characters of Virtue and Vice Described* (1691) and Joseph Hall (Bishop of Exeter), *Characters of Virtue and Vice* (1691).

<sup>28</sup> M. J. Power, 'East London Housing in the 17th Century' and D. W. Jones, 'London Merchants and the Crisis of the 1690s' both in P. Clark and P. Slack eds., *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700* (1972).

<sup>29</sup> A contemporary account is given by Rev. Robert Kirk in his commonplace book now EUL Laing MSS, III, 545, fols. 100ff.

<sup>30</sup> PRO, PC2/74, fols. 39-42.

<sup>31</sup> *ANTIMOIXEIA: Or, the Honest and Joint Design of the Tower Hamlets for the general suppression of BAWDY-Houses* (Guildhall Broadside 1.43 dated 18 June 1691 and signed by the high constables and twenty five citizens of Tower Hamlets).

*Here it is that hirelings consume their wages, that should pay debts to tradesmen, and buy bread for children; thereby families are beggered and parishes much impoverished.*

*Here it is that bodies are poxed and pockets are picked of considerable sums, the revenge of which injuries has frequently occasioned quarrels, fights, bloodshed and murder ... pulling down of signs and parts of houses, breaking of windows ...*

*Here it is that many a housekeeper is infected with a venomous plague which he communicates to his honest and innocent wife.*

*Here it is that multitudes of soldiers and seamen get such bane that effeminates [sic] their spirits and soon rots their bodies, and so renders them unserviceable to their Majesties, and thereby the strength of the nation is mightily ... impaired and weakened.<sup>32</sup>*

In these terms bawdy houses and prostitutes were a very real threat to family and business life rather than merely sinful in some abstract sense. In an area which already had its share of socio-economic problems, no doubt the small traders and tradesmen who - in their roles as churchwardens, constables and other parish officers – signed this document saw issues starkly drawn. Prostitution disrupted economic relationships by diverting wages away from creditors. It tempted servants to steal from their masters and children to defraud their parents, thus striking at two fundamental bonds of society. It spread disease in the process of impoverishing families and increasing the numbers of illegitimate children - all potential drains on parish resources. It imperilled not only the local community, but also the nation by weakening England's men-at-arms.

The Tower Hamlets undertaking found official support and was encouraged by, among others, the Governor of the Tower, Lord Lucas, who was also Lord Lieutenant for the Hamlets, and John Robbins, a Middlesex JP for the Tower Hamlets Division. They brought the local scheme to the attention of other Middlesex justices and the entire bench gave its blessings at a Quarter Sessions on 8 December 1690. The JPs ordered the broadside *ANTIMOIXEIA* printed, framed and hung in the Sessions House at Hicks's Hall, Clerkenwell. Many justices took copies away to spread news of such good works in their own divisions.<sup>33</sup>

The procedure employed by these citizens against their targets was sophisticated, considering the nature of the area and the absence of any prominent figures among the promoters.<sup>34</sup> Each parish in the scheme appointed a steward to oversee the work of the constables and to collect the 5s. subscription each member paid to

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> A Dr. Jeremiah Butts signed the broadside, otherwise there is no clue about occupations of the promoters or their standings in the community.



defray the costs of presenting and prosecuting prostitutes, pimps and keepers of disorderly houses. In addition, the promoters retained an attorney and a solicitor to prepare prosecution cases. Such preparations obviously brought success, for by early 1694 it was claimed that seven to eight hundred criminals had been successfully punished and the number of bawdy houses in the Tower Hamlets visibly reduced.<sup>35</sup> There do appear to have been some problems with countersuits brought against constables and the blackmail of some prostitutes by other greedy officers.<sup>36</sup> But by and large this spontaneous organisation to suppress a particular outcropping of vice in a limited area of London was a success.

It must be emphasised that the Tower Hamlets undertaking was not a 'society for reformation of manners' as that phenomenon would soon be identified, nor was it in the minds of its progenitors the model for similar activity. It was local, spontaneous, with clearly limited objectives in the suppression of prostitution, and only indirectly the stimulus to the creation of what can properly be termed the First Society for Reformation of Manners. This point is confusing since within a short time there existed a genuine reforming society in the Tower Hamlets formed as a result of efforts by the gentlemen inspired by the success of this initial local effort.<sup>37</sup> This process whereby the idea of reforming an area much greater than a neighbourhood was begun is described below.

When one recalls that several Middlesex justices of the peace approved of the Tower Hamlets campaign against bawdy houses and prostitutes and had an account of its successes printed for distribution, then the story told by Edward Stephens of its links with a more formal reformation endeavour, composed of gentlemen of leisure and independent means, with the whole of London and Westminster and their environs as their target, becomes more comprehensible. Stephens recounts how one of the Tower Hamlets undertakers moved to the Strand, and there became acquainted with a gentleman '*whom he believed to be ready to embrace and promote any good proposals for the benefit of his country*'. This gentleman cannot be identified positively, but undoubtedly he was among the small number of '*other*

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<sup>35</sup> *Proposals for a National Reformation of Manners* (1694), p. 24. According to Josiah Woodward, *Account of the Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies* (2nd ed. 1698, p. 75), the Tower Hamlets men procured search warrants from magistrates and brought suspected persons before them. Where necessary, sureties were demanded for future good behaviour of bawdy house keepers and their clients. Churchmen and Dissenters cooperated in this work.

<sup>36</sup> One Frances West, alias Hinton, sued the constables and headborough of Hollywell Street Liberty in the parish of St. Leonard's, Shoreditch, when they arrested her for whoring. The parish officers spent £24 defending themselves (MRO, Sessions Book 500, fols. 50-51, October 1692). In late 1693 several Middlesex JPs investigated extortion charges against constable Jonathan Easden (MRO, Sessions Book 501, fol. 49, December 1693).

<sup>37</sup> Speck and Curtis, 'Societies for Reformation of Manners', pp. 45-46, misunderstand this. Their MS source (Bodl. Rawlinson MS D129, ff. 16-27 'The agreement of the Tower Hamblett [sic] Society') is undated and was relied on by Bahlman, *Moral Revolution*, pp. 31-34 for the claim which Speck and Curtis repeat. This MS, however, also occurs in a fuller collection of reformation of manners material (EUL Laing MS III, 394). By the style of its organisation and its professed motives, this Tower Hamlet Society must be a reforming society based on a city-wide plan, and thus it post-dates the undertaking described in the broadside *ANTIMOIXEIA*.

*gentlemen of his acquaintance, whom he thought had leisure, and were well affected to such works'.*

This circle of friends '*likewise readily embraced the same*' and agreed to meet weekly to further the aims of a campaign for reformation of manners in the capital. These founders were '*all but one private persons and living in several parts, and not likely to be constantly resident and inhabitants about London, and could not conveniently engage in any such parish work*'.<sup>38</sup> What they agreed, therefore, was to direct the campaign, to involve others 'at the top' in their efforts (for reasons of prestige and to defray the costs of law enforcement), and to encourage parish undertakings to do the actual work of reformation. This was the spur to the establishment of true reforming societies in areas such as the Tower Hamlets, where the ground was already well prepared by the spontaneous undertaking against bawdy houses of a few months earlier.<sup>39</sup>

Who were these patriotic and pious gentlemen agreeing, probably in the late spring or early summer of 1691, to forward a reformation of manners campaign? Stephens does not reveal their names, though he does give the important clue that only one was not a 'private' person. It will be argued that this one man was in fact a Middlesex justice of the peace named Ralph Hartley and that his colleagues in this initial endeavour were: Sir Richard Bulkeley, bart.; William Yates, barrister of Lincoln's Inn; and Col. Maynard Colchester, sometime barrister of the Middle Temple. These men shunned publicity from the outset in their personal capacities, and this means that their identities as founders of the First Society for Reformation of Manners can only be ascertained from primary sources.<sup>40</sup>

Having formed a nucleus in London to direct a reformation campaign, the gentlemen founders now had to face up to the task before them. At first, recounts Edward

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<sup>38</sup> Edward Stephens, *The Beginning and Progress of a Needful and Hopeful Reformation in England* (1691), p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> It is likely that these gentlemen published their agreement, though a copy is no longer extant. It could have appeared as the '*laudable undertaking mentioned in a printed paper entitled Anglia Reformatio*' which led to the foundation of the society for reformation in the Tower Hamlets (Bodl. Rawlinson MS D. 129 f. 16).

<sup>40</sup> The preface to *Proposals for a National Reformation of Manners* (1694) states that '*four or five persons only ... at first began the work*'. See also Woodward, *Religious Societies* (1698) p. 70 and *An Account of the Societies for Reformation of Manners, in England and Ireland* 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 1701, p. 4 where the number is given as '*five or six*'. Whether Edward Stephens was among them is a moot point, but his more contemporary account has been followed in this study.

Evidence for these identifications is:

Ralph Hartley: Edward Stephens, *Beginning and Progress*, p. 16 and Edward Fowler (Bp. of Gloucester) *Vindication of an Undertaking of Certain Gentlemen in Order to the Suppressing of Debauchery and Profaneness* (1692), p. 11; also Laing MS III, 394, fol.

Sir Richard Bulkeley: Stephens, *Beginning and Progress*, p. 24; Laing MS III, , fol. 261.

William Yates: Stephens, *Beginning and Progress*, p. 25; Laing MS III, 394, fols. 221-226, BL Loan 29/185, fol. 54 (Edward Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 24 November 1691).

Col. Maynard Colchester: Laing MS III, 394, fols. 383-388; Dedication of William Jones' poem *Ecclesia Reviviscens* (1691); John Dunton, *Life and Errors* (1818), p. 273.

Stephens, *'this appeared a difficulty above their power to overcome'*, since vice *'like a torrent had overspread the whole nation, and all ranks and degrees of people in it, proceeded indeed from the evil examples of late reigns; but yet received great encouragement from the remissness and negligence of the magistrates and justices of the peace, in not duly executing the laws as by their oaths they are obliged to do'*.<sup>41</sup> This was the quintessential problem: the non-enforcement of existing legislation by those specially entrusted to guard England's moral welfare. The gentlemen reformers, therefore, decided to try for the strongest 'lead from the top' possible and approached Queen Mary herself.

The time was now midsummer 1691, shortly before a General Sessions of the Middlesex magistrates. The approach to Queen Mary (William being then abroad) was made by Edward Stillingfleet, Bishop of Worcester, and one of several clerical supporters in the early days of the reformation of manners initiative.<sup>42</sup> According to White Kennett, another clerical supporter, Queen Mary had *'just sentiments'* of the reformation proposals for law enforcement and stricter controls over lax magistrates. She *'thought it became her to give it countenance,... graciously condescended to thank those who were concerned in it, and readily promised them her assistance.'*<sup>43</sup>

The outcome of this was a letter from the Queen to the Middlesex magistrates at their general sessions at Hicks's Hall, Clerkenwell, dated 9 July 1691. In her letter, the Queen acknowledged the *'great and indispensable duty'* she had to *'promote and encourage a reformation of manners of all our subjects'*. By so doing, God would be served and his blessings procured to England. Accordingly, the Middlesex magistrates were ordered *'with all fidelity and impartiality'* to execute the laws against profanations of the Lord's Day, profane swearing and, cursing, drunkenness *'and all other lewd and enormous and disorderly practices, which by a long continued neglect and connivance of the magistrates and officers concerned have universally spread themselves ...'*<sup>44</sup>

The bench's response, at least on paper, was swift. On the next day, 10 July 1691, their sessions order incorporated much of the Queen's letter. The order was printed and fixed to the Sessions House door, and to the church doors and other public places in the county. In what they claimed was a unanimous declaration the Middlesex magistrates undertook to put

*all the laws in execution against profane swearing and cursing, all profanation of the Lord's Day commonly called Sunday, by people travelling, selling or exposing anything to sale, by exercise of their ordinary callings thereon, or by using any other vain employments or sports, and especially by tippling*

<sup>41</sup> Stephens, *Beginning and Progress*, p. 5

<sup>42</sup> Woodward, *Religious Societies*, p. 71; also Fowler, *Vindication*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>43</sup> White Kennett, *Compleat History of England* (1706, ed. of 1719), III, p. 625.

<sup>44</sup> Queen Mary's letter reprinted in Stephens, *Beginning and Progress*, pp. 5-6 and elsewhere in reformation propaganda and apologies.

*thereon, or any part thereon, and neglecting the worship and service of God, and also against the odious and loathsome sin of drunkenness, and against all houses of debauchery and evil fame.*<sup>45</sup>

The sessions order concluded by exhorting parish officers and '*all good Christians ...in their several stations*' to assist the Queen and magistrates in this objective by giving informations against and assisting in the prosecution of all offenders. Here was everything the gentlemen reformers of manners could have wished: official countenance for their objectives, chastisement for lax law enforcement, enumeration of those practices to be suppressed, and – most significant of all for later developments - an unambiguous blessing on the use of informers to obtain convictions.

Shortly after this Middlesex sessions order of early July 1691 came signs that the capital was responding to the Queen's wishes. The City authorities followed the Middlesex lead with an order on 6 August, and it was reported that events '*look with a tendency to reformation .... and many have since felt the penalties*' for immorality and profanity.<sup>46</sup> Robert Harley wrote to his father in early August that this was '*a matter of great rejoicing, that the attempt for the reformation of manners succeeds beyond expectations, and the City concurs so far*'<sup>47</sup> Even the Duke of Norfolk was fined £5 for gaming on Sunday.<sup>48</sup>

Reformation activities soon found their way into the press as well, and the discussion carried on in the question-and-answer paper, *Athenian Mercury*, sheds more light on the movement's ideological pedigree. To the query '*Whether the present offers at a reformation are like to prove effectual?*' the paper's editors replied affirmatively, since '*the best commanders lead the way, and ... the first attempts carry the face of victory*'.<sup>49</sup> After all, William's Irish victory at Aughrim occurred on 11 July, one day after the Middlesex JPs made their strict order against immorality and profanity. The *Mercury*'s editors continued in this patriarchal and providential vein in praising '*an assignation of many persons of quality (of which it may justly be believed Her Majesty in this juncture is the patroness)*' who '*meet to concert measures about the effectual suppressing of such grievances to the government and public good*'.<sup>50</sup>

The *Mercury* authors John Dunton, Samuel Wesley and Richard Sault took an unvarnished providential view of the Revolution of 1688 and William III's role as the agent of a God who '*fixes crowns, makes happy the people, and renders the sword*

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<sup>45</sup> MRO, Sessions Book 487, fols. 78-80

<sup>46</sup> A copy of Lord Mayor Pilkington's order of 6 August 1691 is EUL, Laing MS 111,394, fols. 33-48; *Portledge Papers* (1 August 1691), p. 117.

<sup>47</sup> BL, Loan 29/185, fol. 142 (4 August 1691).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 152 (15 August 1691).

<sup>49</sup> *Athenian Mercury*, III, no. 3 (3 August 1691).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

victorious'. It is small wonder that they saw the hand of this same deity in reformation of manners activities in London in 1691.<sup>51</sup>

It is now time to examine in detail the machinery created by the reformers of manners whose workings apparently produced such adulation from their admirers in the early days. The reformers were aware of the overriding need to foster *'combinations and public confederacies in virtue, to balance and counterpoise those of vice'*, and their societies for reformation of manners were just such creatures.<sup>52</sup> Existing statutes punishing immorality and profanity depended on information about wrongdoing being laid before a magistrate. The need, then, was to convince people to give such informations [*sic*, the contemporary usage] since without this laws would be a mockery. Accordingly, the gentlemen reformers, whose First Society was now attracting men of rank and some fortune, encouraged the formation of *'a considerable number of persons of the Church of England' to 'go out into the streets and markets, and public places on purpose, and to observe the people's behaviour there, and of such offences as they observed to be committed ... to give information to some justice of the peace at their next leisure'*<sup>53</sup>

This body of informers may have numbered at its most developed as many as 150 to 200. It was always claimed that such informers acted only out of a realisation of their duties as Christians and patriots, but such altruistic protestations were bound to draw accusations of hypocrisy and outright extortion given the prevailing judicial system whereby informers collected up to one-half of fines resulting from their information. Though reformation informers were not in theory allowed to profit by their work, it was not long before the movement's enemies seized on its use of informers as one of its more vulnerable aspects.

To further grease the wheels of existing judicial machinery, the gentlemen reformers printed a supply of blank warrants pertaining to the offences of swearing and cursing, drunkenness, exercising trade on the Lord's Day, exposing goods to sale on that day, tippling, and neglect of duty by parochial officers.<sup>54</sup> To avoid plaguing the JPs with additional work, and having to pay their clerks a fee for warrant-filling, the reformers *'provided and employed fit persons in several parts of the city and suburbs to fill up the same ... for any who should be willing at any time to give information..'*<sup>55</sup> There were said to be about twenty such 'fillers up' of warrants around London, though no record giving names, occupations or locations survives.<sup>56</sup> But we do know that such persons kept registers noting the number and type of warrant they completed, and every Friday an officer retained by the reformers of manners called

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Richard Allestree, *Causes of the Decay of Piety* (1676), a frequently used justification in reformation propaganda.

<sup>53</sup> Stephens, *Beginning and Progress*, pp. 9-10, which agrees in detail with EUL Laing MS 111,394, fol. 241ff.

<sup>54</sup> Specimen warrants for these offences are EUL Laing MS III, 394, fols. 307-314.

<sup>55</sup> Stephens, *op. cit.*

<sup>56</sup> Fowler, *Vindication*, pp. 7-8.

to collect these for an audit whereby details were recorded in the main records kept by the gentlemen of the First Society for Reformation of Manners.

After completion with the details provided by the informer and recording in the register, the warrant was returned to the informer for presentation to a magistrate. The justice then examined the informer under oath as to the warrant's truthfulness and, if he was satisfied, the warrant was signed and sealed on the spot. This avoided the expense of paying the justice's clerk for clerical work and the time usually involved in waiting for this to be done in the usual way. Such a quick despatch method, the reformers thought, would encourage the laying of informations and save the justices any additional work which might be a disincentive. The reformers instructed the informers to take the signed and sealed warrant from the magistrate back to the person who had originally filled it up, thus saving the JP the expense of sending it to the appropriate constable himself. Once weekly, the society's agent would collect all warrants, plus the appropriate registers, and leave a fresh stock of blank warrants and registers.

At the First Society for Reformation's regular Friday meeting, all these documents were examined for accuracy, sorted by parish, abstracted for permanent record, then despatched to the constables of the respective parishes for execution. Here was a system servicing the existing judicial machinery reflecting the skills of men trained in the execution of the law such as William Yates, Ralph Hartley and Col. Colchester. What happened to the warrants at the parish level also reflected their knowledge of the remissness often shown by parochial officers to their duties. To overcome this, the reformers must have favoured constables known to be trustworthy and as an additional check, their agents carried an abstract of each warrant and entered beside it the name of the constable to whom the full warrant was delivered. These abstracts were designed to be produced from time to time at petty sessions where constables could be required to account for their subsequent actions. Not only parish constables were monitored in this way. Churchwardens too could be checked, since the fines from convicted offenders were received by them for the use of the parish and parochial records could be compared against warrant abstracts as a gauge of the churchwardens' diligence and financial rectitude.<sup>57</sup>

The reformation of manners machinery was hierarchical just as was the statutory law enforcement system it monitored at every level. Reformation endeavours themselves were in essence patriarchal, mirroring the ideas of the gentlemen supplying the finance and initiative to the movement and the structure of the society which they sought to influence.<sup>58</sup> At the top was the First Society for Reformation of Manners composed of the original four or five gentlemen reformers joined by *'persons of eminency in the law, members of Parliament, justices of the peace, and*

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<sup>57</sup> EUL Laing MS III, 394, fols. 49-57 passim.

<sup>58</sup> Gordon J. Schochet, *Patriarchalism in Political Thought* (Oxford, 1975), passim.

*considerable citizens of London of known abilities and great integrity*'.<sup>59</sup> These reformation directors formulated policy and supplied the not inconsiderable sums necessary to initiate and carry through prosecutions for immorality and profanity. A subordinate 'second society' also existed, composed mainly of tradesmen, concentrating on suppressing lewdness and sexual licence as well as swearing, drunkenness and profanations of the Lord's Day. This section of the movement was responsible for the publication of the names of convicted offenders called the *Black Roll* (later *Black Lists*) which first appeared in 1694.

A third subordinate society for reformation was composed entirely of constables who combined their statutory duties with a zeal for reformation activities. Each constable took a specific part of the City and made a special effort to inspect bawdy and disorderly houses and arrest the drunkards, swearers and Sabbath profaners they found there. A fourth subordinate society, referred to already above, was reckoned by some reformation of manners apologists to be the lynch pin of the whole movement. This consisted of the informers, whose activities were, according to their apologists, an '*example ... of zeal and Christian courage ... so necessary to the welfare of their country*'.<sup>60</sup> The reformers of manners continually emphasised that persons giving information acted from selfless motives, having only the well-being of the offender and the safety of society as a whole at heart. Unfortunately for this scheme, informers had a bad reputation in late seventeenth-century England, not least from the abuses associated with their activities against Dissenters in pre-Toleration Act days.<sup>61</sup> Since the use of informers would later become a central issue in the debate about the need for and activities of reformation of manners societies, it is necessary here to investigate more closely the reformers' reasons for using such practices.

By the first week of August 1691, it was claimed that '*everybody knows of the anonymous Abstract of Laws and Penalties*' published by the reformers of manners and that reformation activities had '*put every criminal into a posture of defence*'.<sup>62</sup> Since informers were essential to these activities, the *Athenian Mercury* published a long vindication of them and their pious motives. With an eye to the recent past, when Dissent was the target of informers, the *Mercury* stressed that it was '*an ill argument to say, because informing was once an enemy to virtue, it may not be so to vice*'.<sup>63</sup> Expanding on this line of argument, the informers' apologists reasoned that anyone having knowledge of the Middlesex Sessions Order of 10 July or having seen the *Abstract of Laws and Penalties* who then failed to report misdeeds '*against*

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<sup>59</sup> *Account of the Societies ... in England and Ireland*, p. 8

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10

<sup>61</sup> See R. A. Beddard, 'Vincent Alsop and the Emancipation of Restoration Dissent', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, April 1973, p. 171ff. for the role of informers. See also, *The Character of an Informer, wherein his Mischievous Nature and Lewd Practices are Detected* (1675) and M.W. Beresford, 'The Common Informer, the Penal Statutes and Economic Regulation', *Economic History Review*, 1957; 10 (2): pp 222–238.

<sup>62</sup> *Athenian Mercury*, III, no. 3 (4 August 1691).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

*the peace and welfare of the government'* was an accessory to the crime and guilty of the offence of misprison. In an explicitly patriarchal passage, the *Mercury's* editors likened the government of England to *'a great family, where the King is the father'*, and a genuine informer to a virtuous son taking action when he discovers conspiracies to bring ruin on the family. Informing could not be base or mean since it was *'a just and warrantable means to preserve virtue, liberty, laws, and all that is dear to good men'*. These together constituted *'the ends of a rational creature'*, and added the argument of sin's irrationality to the previously expounded one of sin's threat to man as a communal being.<sup>64</sup> By branding immorality and profanity as both irrational and unnatural to God's intentions for human society, the reformers of manners sounded a theme in their earliest apologies which would continue well past the societies' active period. The argument was not new, but its use as part of the justification of the para-legal employment of informers to obtain convictions under existing legislation sets it apart from the normal run of moral reasoning.

In later issues of the *Athenian Mercury*, the editors took pains to distinguish the reformation informer from common informers *'who merely for lucre or malice prosecute vexatious indictments, informations and actions, upon penal statutes, without regard to the state of the government, and the reformation of the offenders'*. The pious informer could take comfort in being *'almost a martyr for the cause of virtue, and the good laws of the land'* in case neighbours were angered or his business suffered because of his actions.<sup>65</sup> This dissociation from common informers had a more practical side as well. At that time perjury was not a felony on first offence and not even punishable if perjured information was found in court to be not essential to the prosecution.<sup>66</sup> The last thing that the reformers wished, therefore, was a flood of hasty or perjured informations furthering personal grievances.

It seems that during July and August 1691, the reformers' greasing of the existing judicial system in London paid dividends, especially against profaners of the Lord's Day.<sup>67</sup> By early August it was claimed that a weekly petty sessions sat at Bloomsbury Court House and at the main Sessions House in Hicks's Hall, Clerkenwell, especially to convict offenders named in reformation-inspired warrants. By this date as many as 140 warrants had already been granted against offences mentioned in the Middlesex Sessions Order of 10 July, *'for which neither any justice, nor his clerk, have had one farthing for fees'*. And, the ebullient *Athenian Mercury* continued, *'things are so well managed, that in ten thousand warrants, which perhaps may be granted before a twelvemonth expires, it shall not be in the power of the officers themselves that levy the penalties, to cheat 5s.'*<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., *passim*.

<sup>65</sup> *Athenian Mercury*, III, no. 7 (15 August 1691); also IV, nos. 11 and 30.

<sup>66</sup> Ogg, *James II and William III*, p. 105 citing *English Reports*, XCI (King's Bench 1067, *Rex v. Griep*, 9 Wm 111).

<sup>67</sup> Stephens, *Beginning and Progress*, p. 11; Fowler, *Vindication*, p. 9.

<sup>68</sup> *Athenian Mercury*, III, no. 3, *passim*.



With friendly magistrates receiving warrants from informers, successful prosecutions increasing, and a solution apparently found to the intractable problem of speculation by parish officers, all that remained was for the first apologists for the reformation movement to highlight the endeavour with an edifying 'case history'. True to type, the *Athenian Mercury* provided this in its account of 'some persons disaffected to the present government' who to show their contempt of the Middlesex Sessions Order banning tippling on the Lord's Day, went to the Horseshoe Tavern in Drury Lane on Sunday 26 July. The landlord refused them admittance and they went to another public house in the same street '*where they drank themselves all so dead drunk, that one of them never awoke*'.<sup>69</sup> The moral of this tale was plain: vice abetted both political disloyalty and contempt for the laws protecting God's special day. It was only just, therefore, that such recalcitrant sinners should be struck down if they refused to reform their manners.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., see also *A Second Modest Enquiry into the Causes of the Present Disasters in England* (1690).

## CHAPTER TWO

### EARLY DAYS OF OPPOSITION AND STRUGGLE

After the establishment of the First Society for Reformation in 1691, its founders encountered opposition from some of the Middlesex justices of the peace. This chapter details this conflict and examines the evidence from both sides. A resolution in favour of the gentlemen reformers and their supporters in the reforming societies now spreading across London was crucial to the survival of the movement.

The late summer of 1691 was a halcyon time for the London reformers of manners. Their societies were established in the metropolis and spreading into surrounding counties. The *Athenian Mercury* was promoting a campaign 'to detect the vile haunts and practices of those lewd women called nightwalkers', in line with reformation objectives.<sup>70</sup> City officials too seemed to favour curtailing the excesses of Bartholomew Fair with its drinking houses and play booths. All this prompted Robert Harley to rejoice that 'the attempt for the reformation of manners succeeds beyond expectation....'<sup>71</sup> London's prostitutes and fair-goers were to prove more difficult to control than the reformers originally thought.<sup>72</sup> The real problem, though, emanated from within a part of the legal establishment itself. Hostility to the reformation campaign burst forth in September 1691 led by anti-reformation JPs on the Middlesex bench which nearly succeeded in discrediting the gentlemen reformers and sinking their endeavours.

It was the reformers' use of informers which provided the ostensible reason for the attacks. They were prepared to bear 'the rude assaults of licentious debauchees', but 'the brow-beatings and discouragements of such as were bound by the tremendous bound of an oath, and the divine trust of authority to do otherwise' proved harder to endure, especially when the chief among the movement's detractors sat on the Middlesex bench of justices which only a few months earlier had so positively endorsed Queen Mary's letter urging reformation of manners.<sup>73</sup>

In the reformers' scheme for law enforcement, magistrates receiving informations from informers generally concealed the name of the informer from the offender to avoid reprisals. But not all justices of the peace were well disposed to reformation informers and this meant that the informers had to 'seek out for other justices

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<sup>70</sup> *Athenian Mercury* III, no. 1 (28 July 1691). This was the predecessor of Dunton's later *Nightwalker* (8 pts., Sept. 1696 - Apr. 1697) which he described in *Life and Errors*, p. 201, as 'a design to expose vice'. See also *Character of a Jacobite* (1690) for the link between popery and prostitution.

<sup>71</sup> BL Loan 29/185, fol. 142 (Robert Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 4 August 1691). See also *Athenian Mercury* III, no. 3 (4 August 1691)

<sup>72</sup> See the retrospective lament *Reasons formerly published for the Punctual Limiting of Bartholomew Fair to ... three Days* (1711); and Sybil Rosenfeld, *The Theatre of the London Fairs in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1960), *passim*.

<sup>73</sup> Woodward, *Religious Societies*, p. 81.

*of the peace where they might have better treatment and more easy dispatch to return to their own employment...*<sup>74</sup> Here was a clear tendency for factionalism and graft to develop, at least in the eyes of those magistrates not well disposed to the machinery of reformation.

In an effort to overcome judicial laxity, Edward Stephens published an anonymous indictment in the *Athenian Mercury* in early September 1691 against certain magistrates in the capital. Stephens did not mince his words in stating that a magistrate who in the light of his oath refused to take an information was guilty of '*perjury before God*'. The author even suggested that such magistrates should be removed from authority, since it was '*plain matter of fact that many addicted to the late King James are so far transported with faction, that they not only refuse to observe our solemn fasts, but oppose the reformation of manners of the nation...*'<sup>75</sup> This charge was sufficient for some magistrates to seek an order binding the *Mercury's* publishers to good behaviour. That move failed, as did efforts to discover Stephens' identity as the indictment's author. All of this only fuelled the fires of the reformation's judicial opponents on the Middlesex bench. In late September 1691 matters came to a head over the role played in the reformation movement by Ralph Hartley, Middlesex JP and member of the First Society for Reformation of Manners.

Hartley was a natural person for informers to turn to '*where they might have better treatment and an easy dispatch*', and he quickly became so well known that '*there were some hundreds of informations brought to him, and upon due examination he granted his warrants accordingly*'.<sup>76</sup> By late November it was alleged that he had issued eight hundred warrants in the preceding two months.<sup>77</sup> Some errors were bound to occur given this volume, and these irregularities formed the basis of charges brought against Ralph Hartley by his fellow magistrates alleging his, and by implication the reformers', interference with the judicial machinery of London.

The gentlemen reformers of the First Society occasionally met in the chambers of William Yates, a barrister of Lincoln's Inn. Ralph Hartley also met informers here from time to time, rather than at his home in the City. On one occasion, when Sir Richard Bulkeley and Mr. Yates were also present, an informer arrived and Bulkeley recognised him as the constable of his own parish, '*of whom Sir Richard had heard great complaints for divers miscarriages of neglects of his office*'.<sup>78</sup>

Bulkeley took the opportunity to reprove the constable and threatened to have him prosecuted if he did not reform his own manners. Though the reformers were later at pains to stress the uniqueness of this encounter (possibly the constable was using his position for extortion), the reformation's enemies used it to construct a charge

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<sup>74</sup> EUL Laing MS III,394, p. 256.

<sup>75</sup> *Athenian Mercury* III, no. 12 (5 Sept. 1691), reprinted in Stephens, *Beginning and Progress*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>76</sup> Stephens, *Beginning and Progress*, p. 16.

<sup>77</sup> BL Loan 29/185, fol. 254 (Edward Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 24 November 1691).

<sup>78</sup> EUL Laing MS III, 394, p. 261.

that William Yates' chambers were an office regularly used for issuing Ralph Hartley's irregular warrants, and that Sir Richard Bulkeley impersonated a justice of the peace there to further his own interests in the reformation of manners schemes.

On 12 October 1691, the Middlesex bench issued a Sessions Order claiming '*that Sir Richard Bulkeley has set up an office at Lincoln's Inn ... to superintend the actions of ... justices of the peace; and has caused several orders and warrants to be printed without lawful authority so to do; and by the aid of Ralph Hartley, one of their Majesties' Justices of the Peace for this County, has caused several convictions to be made against several persons ... contrary to law....*' Sir Charles Lee was named to head a committee of twelve JPs investigating the matter and Middlesex high constables were directed to produce any warrants already issued for Lord's Day offences bearing on the matter.

The Order condemned the reformers' policy of anonymous information giving, saying that alleged offenders must be confronted with their accusers and that no convictions were to be made by justices in the accused's absence. Furthermore, no convictions were to be made by a JP outside of his own district, thus reducing the tendency for informers to favour particular 'friendly' justices of the peace. The Middlesex Sessions Records do not contain the information on which this Order was allegedly based. Edward Stephens, among others, asserted at the time that no such information existed and that the Order was an official fabrication used by anti-reformation JPs against their colleague Ralph Hartley and his friends directing the reformation of manners movement in London.<sup>79</sup>

Though it is impossible to prove Stephens right or wrong in his charge, parallel evidence is sufficiently strong to suggest its truth. On 16 October, Sir Richard Bulkeley wrote to Sir Charles Lee a letter emphasising that the reformers of manners made no profit out of their law enforcement endeavours and that it cost them a not inconsiderable sum in the process. He also sent Sir Charles copies of the registers used to record the warrants issued to constables so that his committee could check the regularity of the undertaking. In the light of the charges of the Sessions Order four days previously, Bulkeley's letter is very curious. He defends the gentlemen reformers against charges of speculation and profiteering, when in fact no such allegations were made in the Order. Stephens explained this by saying that the true nature of the charges against Bulkeley and Hartley were kept from the gentlemen reformers and that Sir Richard therefore assumed that it was only common gossip about profit which needed to be answered in his letter.

The hostile JPs, said Stephens, refused to divulge either the information or the names of the reformers' accusers which prompted the Order of 12 October. They also disregarded Sir Richard's letter of the 16th, since on that day Sir Charles Lee's committee produced its report. Against this apparent disregard for justice, Edward

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<sup>79</sup> The order is MRO Sessions Book 490, fols. 52-53; for comment see Stephens, *Beginning and Progress*, pp. 19-20.

Stephens thundered that Bulkeley's treatment was a *'plain demonstration that it was not any sincere regard to justice, but ... an evil design to obstruct and discourage the execution of the laws, contrary to the Queen's letter and to the Order of Sessions [10 July]'*.<sup>80</sup>

Lee's report confirmed the Order of 12 October, but does not itself appear in the Sessions Books, thus lending credence to Stephens' charge that the matter was pursued by dishonest means. The only extant record of the report exists in a MS compiled by the reformers themselves. Since it succinctly states the position of the anti-reformation of manners JPs, it is reproduced here in full.

*We, whose names are subscribed, in pursuance of an Order of Reference [12 October 1691] ... have made diligent inquiry and examined into the particulars to us referred; and upon the whole matter our opinions are, first it appearing to us upon oath, that there is, and for some months last past has been, an office or society kept in Lincoln's Inn, commonly called Sir Richard Bulkeley's office in the chamber of Mr. Yates; and that there does preside Sir Richard Bulkeley assisted with [sic] Mr. Hartley and Mr. Yates. That when any constables have recourse to the said office, the said Sir Richard Bulkeley gives directions, replemands [sic], and threatens the respective constables, personating a justice of the peace, and the said Mr. Hartley speaking but little, and being made use of only as a property to sign all the warrants presented by the said Sir Richard Bulkeley and Mr. Yates.*

*That when the constables go to Mr. Hartley, to his habitation in London, to complain of the irregularity of the said warrants, he bids them come to the said office. That we have perused about 500 hundred warrants of conviction, signed by the said Mr. Hartley. That many of them are illegal, some of them nugatory and trifling, and all of them irregular. It appears to us that some are convicted for suffering tipling [sic] in their houses, that never sold any drink, others convicted that had been dead two years before the time of conviction.*

*That there are about four hundred informers belonging to the said office, who carry out warrants from the said office ready filled up, and tender the same to be signed to several justices, who if they do (upon not being well satisfied with these proceedings) refuse to sign the same, are threatened to have their names returned into the said office.*

*And we are of the opinion, that the multiplicity of those irregular convictions is a great hinderance [sic] to their Majesties revenue of excise, and a great oppression upon the people, and tends to the ruin of most victuallers and alehouse keepers, and makes the present government uneasy to them, as appears to us by their frequent and daily complaints. That the proceedings of the said office or society is a great affront to, and so resented by, the whole*

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<sup>80</sup> Stephens reprints Bulkeley's letter in *Beginning and Progress*, p. 24 with comments.

*Commission of the Peace. And we are of opinion that such warrants as are issued out of the said office, not executed, should be superseded.*<sup>81</sup>

'Among so many informations', the reformers claimed, 'it was a wonder if no involuntary mistakes were committed'.<sup>82</sup> They further conceded that the two mistakes identified in the Committee's report were true, but resulted from trivial errors of identification and were not serious breaches of judicial ethics or procedure. To the charge that the whole Middlesex bench resented Sir Richard's efforts, Edward Stephens retorted that most JPs favoured a reformation of manners and that opposition came only from a clique of self-interested magistrates of questionable morals and loyalty.<sup>83</sup> These were strong views that were soon to usher in the next and more serious chapter of opposition.

Sir Charles Lee's report was confirmed by a Sessions Order dated 16 October 1691.<sup>84</sup> All constables were to return any warrants for Lord's Day offences signed by Ralph Hartley and JPs were to discharge at petty sessions anyone convicted already on a Hartley warrant. Since no Middlesex Sessions Book survives for November 1691, one cannot be sure how the campaign against Hartley and his friends developed that month. But it is clear that some of Hartley's prominent enemies, among them Sir Thomas Rowe and James Munday, complained about his activities to the Lords Commissioners of the Great Seal. Since Stephens' anonymous *Beginning and Progress of a Needful and Hopeful Reformation of Manners* appeared around this time, its harsh reflections on the anti-Hartley JPs were also included in the complaint. The result was a summons on 18 November for all three gentlemen reformers to appear before the Commissioners. In particular Bulkeley was required 'to answer such matters and things that shall be objected against you ... concerning your taking upon you the office of a justice of the peace ...'<sup>85</sup>

Both Hartley and Bulkeley were suspected of involvement with the publication of the *Beginning and Progress* pamphlet, but Edward Stephens was always ready to own his own work and informed the Commissioners he was the author and enclosed a copy with his admission. Edward Harley reported at the time that this publication 'greatly incensed' the Commissioners, and that the Speaker of the House of Commons, Sir John Trevor, who was also First Commissioner, 'carried Mr. Edward Stephens' book to the King, in which he had marked several things which he said deserved a severe reprimand'. William, however, did not share Trevor's ire and 'directed that there should not be any prosecution'.<sup>86</sup>

At their interview with the Lords Commissioners of the Great Seal at Powis House on 23 November, Sir Richard and Ralph Hartley did not fare as well as their apologist

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<sup>81</sup> EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 221-26.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p. 258.

<sup>83</sup> Stephens, *Beginning and Progress*, pp. 28-29. See also Fowler, *Vindication*, p. 12.

<sup>84</sup> MRO Sessions Book 490, fol. 57.

<sup>85</sup> EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 203-04.

<sup>86</sup> BL Loan 29/185, fols. 254-55 (Edward Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 28 and 29 November 1691).

Edward Stephens had. They were confronted with the now familiar charges of issuing irregular warrants, mostly against alehouse keepers for permitting tippling on the Lord's Day, and for keeping the 'office' in Yates' chambers at Lincoln's Inn as an encouragement to informers.<sup>87</sup> It must have been a tense occasion, since no less than seven bishops appeared at the interview in support of the gentlemen reformers and their endeavours. The bishops' record of the encounter survives and contained the following exchange.<sup>88</sup>

Before the three reformers could answer the charges brought by the hostile JPs, two of the Commissioners (Trevor and Sir George Hutchings, Serjeant-at-Law and MP for Barnstaple) *'began ... to check and discountenance them and did reprove the said Justice Hartley for granting of warrants against persons out of his own [Fulham] division'*. Hartley's counsel replied that a JP's commission empowered him to act in all parts of the county and that his oath of office further obliged him *'to make warrants upon good informations against offenders in what part of the county soever'*. Commissioners Trevor and Hutchings replied contemptuously to the reformers' defence that they acted solely to enforce existing laws pertaining to the Lord's Day, saying that the churches could not possibly hold all of the people even if they wished to attend services and that nothing else could be expected but that some people would resort to alehouses during service times. They further reproached the use of informers to obtain convictions, and rebuked Sir Richard Bulkeley for printing and distributing the 10 July Middlesex Sessions Order at his own expense.

The reformers replied to these and other charges, particularly about peculation and profiteering, by saying that *'neither Mr. Hartley, his clerk, nor any informer or other person accused either directly or indirectly received one penny for issuing any warrants, or meddled with any of the money levied upon offenders; but that it was punctually paid to the church wardens for the use of the poor'*. The gravest charge made by the Lords Commissioners, and others afterwards, against reformation activities in general, was that prosecuting alehouse keepers injured the Crown's revenues at a time when England's war effort required a strong financial basis. This was the same charge made by Sir Charles Lee's report the previous month and Sir John Trevor expanded on this line of argument on 23 November. He told Bulkeley, Hartley and Yates that since the Crown had relinquished sources of revenue such as the Court of Wards, the excise on beer and ale and other drink had assumed a very important place in royal finances, and that therefore *'all tenderness was to be had for*

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<sup>87</sup> From 'An Account of the several divisions and parishes in which any warrants were served ...', EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 315-22, it appears that Hartley issued in the Tower Division alone 134 warrants (110 for permitting tippling during sermon'. time, 18 for exercising trade on Sunday, 4 for drunkenness, and 2 for swearing). Hartley is also credited with issuing 18 out of 20 warrants for tippling in his own Fulham Division, and 123 for this offence in Westminster Division. His warrants also pertain to Bloomsbury and Hicks's Hall Divisions, indicating the range from which informers came to him. Hartley's warrants against tippling amount to 315, and if one includes those for swearing, Sunday trading, and drunkenness, the grand total is 513.

<sup>88</sup> EUL Laing MS 111,394, pp. 273-82, *passim*; copies of the summonses are *ibid*, pp. 203-06.

it'.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, Trevor argued, the statute bestowing the excise on the Crown had in his opinion removed the power of JPs to regulate alehouses, and therefore Hartley's warrants were without legal foundation.

What the reformers replied is unknown in detail, but the views of Bishop Edward Fowler of Gloucester, present at the interview, probably represent them fairly accurately.<sup>90</sup> Bishop Fowler, in his anonymous *Vindication of an Undertaking of Certain Gentlemen, in Order to the Suppressing of Debauchery and Profaneness*, attacked Trevor's views on the lessening of excise revenue by saying that William and Mary would never seek to enlarge the Crown's revenues 'by the sins of their people'. Their Majesties, the Bishop continued, did not need to be told 'that their revenues must most certainly be exceedingly diminished by the poverty of their subjects ... and nothing is more observed, than that multitudes of them do every year bring themselves and families to a morsel of bread, by being permitted so much drink, expressly contrary to our laws, which lay great restraints upon drinking-houses, and drinkers in them, not only on Sundays, but the weekdays too'.<sup>91</sup> The reformers doubtless sought to keep their arguments firmly within the sphere of customary morality as sanctioned by the Christian religion and existing laws. Their opponents on this occasion ignored completely this dimension and concentrated on what they perceived as legal irregularities in the way the reformers proceeded towards their objectives and the alleged harm to the financial structure that such reformation activity produced. These were the battle positions over which the next stage of the struggle was fought.

The conclusion of the seven bishops at the hearing on 23 November 1691 was that '*nothing worthy of blame was proved against the said Justice Hartley and the two aforementioned gentlemen, but that they had behaved themselves with a great deal of zeal and been at great charge and went on in the prosecuting the end of [Queen Mary's letter to the Middlesex JPs of 9 July] and had kept ... themselves within the bounds both of law and prudence ....*'<sup>92</sup> The reformers' opponents on the Middlesex bench and elsewhere in high places nevertheless continued their efforts to prove the illegality of the reformation of manners endeavours and during December 1691 petty sessions were often occupied with examining more of Ralph Hartley's warrants. On 11 December another investigating committee met to hear more complaints about Justice Hartley's conduct. Hartley was to be present, and so were the informers who acted with him.

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<sup>89</sup> Dennis Rubini, *Court and Country, 1688-1702*, chap 3 discusses this in detail. The excise on beer, ale, etc. was doubled in November 1690.

<sup>90</sup> Present with Fowler were the Bishops of Norwich, Worcester, Bath and Wells, Salisbury, Chester, and Bristol.

<sup>91</sup> Fowler, *Vindication*, pp. 14-15. Designed to appear at the same time as Stephens' *Beginning and Progress*, ie November 1691, Fowler's pamphlet was delayed by Sir John Trevor who tried to have Archbishop Tillotson suppress it. It appeared finally in the spring of 1692, as Fowler recounted to Archbishop of York John Sharp (Sharp Papers, Box 4, Bundle L, No. 87, 6 April 1699).

<sup>92</sup> EUL Laing MS 111,394, pp. 280-81



One of the cases examined on 11 December at the Hicks's Hall hearing was Francis Askey's, a '*distiller*' of St. James's parish, Westminster, who complained that because of a warrant of conviction issued against him by Ralph Hartley on 30 September, alleging that he exercised his trade the previous Sunday, the constables distrained a silver spoon from him in lieu of the 5s. fine. Askey's complaint hinged on the description of him in Hartley's warrant as '*Francis Askew [sic] strongwaterman*', implying that he retailed drink rather than manufactured it.

No doubt such a small scale operation blurred the line between making and selling drink, but the justices of the committee allowed his complaint since Askey further complained that Hartley fined him unheard and '*he never had opportunity of answering any complaints touching the matter*'. The Court stressed their adherence to the letter of the law in overturning this and many other Hartley warrants. They concluded, after hearing what Hartley himself had to say in the matter, that his warrant levying five shillings only contained the formula '*lawfully convicted before me*', and this was insufficient proof that the conviction actually rested upon a sworn information. Further, the JPs adjudged the distraint of the silver spoon to be illegal and ordered its return to Askey because the crime for which it was taken by the constables was not specified in Hartley's warrant. Since Askey was convicted unheard, the Court argued, this meant he might have had a defence for exercising his trade on Sunday such as doing an act of charity or necessity and thus gaining exemption from the general prohibition against profanation of the Lord's Day.<sup>93</sup>

Other acts of Ralph Hartley intensified the hatred against him that was building up among some of his colleagues on the Middlesex bench. Not the least of these was Hartley's fining of Sir Thomas Rowe for swearing three oaths. Sir Thomas sent his colleague Thomas Smith to see Hartley afterwards and referring to Hartley's warrant against Rowe, Smith said, '*I come to you from him to offer you peace or war. If you will let him alone, he will let you alone. If you will forgive what is past and not give out your warrant against him, he will be friends with you and all shall be well. If not, you must take what follows*'. Hartley replied, '*if that be the condition, then I must have war, for I have convicted him and I cannot without breach of my oath put it up*'.<sup>94</sup>

Hartley's intransigence on reformation matters no doubt embittered further the JPs reporting on irregularities in his warrants and the report read out in Court on 12 October was very condemnatory. At the justices' dinner that evening matters came to a head when a health was proposed to 'Titus Oates'. Ambrose Isted bristled at this, saying he would not drink a health to any rogue, when some of his colleagues whispered that it was not the real Oates but Ralph Hartley who was meant to be the rogue. When the health came round to Hartley himself, he asked who started it and was told that Col. Corbet Henn was behind the joke. Hartley then proposed a health to 'Dr. Oates and Col. Henn' which caused Henn to swear that he would gladly give

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<sup>93</sup> MRO Sessions Book 491, fols. 50-51; see also the superseding of Hartley warrants at Bloomsbury Court House on 1 December, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-82.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 197-99, *passim*.

five pounds to see Hartley hanged. Hartley then gave Henn the same treatment that Sir Thomas Rowe had earlier received, and demanded a fine of one shilling for the oath. At this point Ambrose Isted stood up and *'moved the justices that an address might be drawn up to the King and Council to have Mr. Hartley turned out of the Commission of the Peace as a troublesome person, and one that hindered the King's business, and that a committee be appointed for that purpose'*.<sup>95</sup>

A committee was appointed for this purpose, but addressed its petition on 17 December 1691 not to William but to the Lords Commissioners as a more friendly audience. It stressed that Hartley's actions alienated the people from them as representatives of the Crown's authority. The leading Middlesex JPs in this move were Sir Charles Lee, Sir Thomas Rowe, James Munday, Thomas Smith, Ambrose Isted, Theophilus Eyton, John Robbins, Thomas Harriott, James Cardrow, and Henry Higden. Their efforts were successful and led Edward Harley to lament in a letter to his father in early January 1692 that *'the ... lukewarmness into which the reformation is sunk gives ... reason to fear an encroaching storm. Mr. Hartley who has carried himself so worthily was yesterday turned out of the Commission.'*<sup>96</sup>

Hartley's removal from the Middlesex bench began a complex series of events which itself resulted in yet another regulation of the Commission of the Peace, but this time in favour of the gentlemen reformers of manners. At first the anti-reformation faction on the Middlesex bench consolidated their apparent victory. They produced a Sessions Order repudiating all of Hartley's efforts and the reformation of manners endeavours in general while being careful to applaud all of Queen Mary's admonitions of the previous July. They made a clear distinction between what should happen to produce a reformation and what had in fact happened *'by the rash and unadvised actions of several persons, pretending great zeal....'*<sup>97</sup> This was an unmistakable reference to the Hartley-Bulkeley-Yates affair of the previous autumn.

Though this Sessions Order rehearsed the proper way for giving informations and pledged magistrates to welcome anyone informing against Lord's Day offences and other immoralities, the reformers of manners gave it a very critical reception. Its primary aim, they claimed, was to curtail the activities of their informers against vice, since it insisted that the accused must be confronted by the person giving the information with all the opportunity for reprisal which this might give. Much worse, in the reformers' eyes, was the hypocritical endorsement of the idea of reformation when it was plain that the Middlesex JPs could not themselves enforce the Order of 10 July and instead many of them tolerated *'all manner of lewdness'* which was a

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid, pp. 199-202, passim.

<sup>96</sup> BL Loan 29/186, fol. 7 (Edward Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 9 January 1692)

<sup>97</sup> Op. cit., 493, fols. 57-59

*'great dishonour to God Almighty, and scandal to true religion, to the public violation of the known laws of the land and contrary to their several oaths'.<sup>98</sup>*

Not all the activity after Hartley's removal came from his enemies. The seven bishops proceeded to draft a report vindicating the reforming justice and his associates. This was intended for Queen Mary, but whether it was presented is not clear, though the substance was no doubt communicated to her by individual bishops who were Court preachers and political supporters. The bishops accused several Middlesex JPs of attacking Hartley as a diversion for their own illegal activities and profiteering from law enforcement and implied that Commissioners Trevor and Hutchings were motivated by something less than enthusiasm for the execution of the Queen's letter of July concerning national reformation.<sup>99</sup>

Another ecclesiastical move which did appear in a formal document was a petition to King William for a royal proclamation against vice and profaneness. This was being mooted among the bishops in late November 1691 and within a month it was the talk in government circles that *'the bishops have petitioned the King that the laws may be vigorously executed against profaneness and debauchery'*, though as Edward Harley wrote, *'there is no evidence yet of its effect'*.<sup>100</sup> The petition was signed by six out of the seven bishops present at the hearing before the Lords Commissioners in late November (Edward Fowler being the sole curious exception) and was also signed by the two Archbishops, Tillotson of Canterbury and Sharp of York. Though reformation of manners societies were not directly mentioned, the bishops' petition requested the King to *'require all that act by your Majesty's authority in their respective stations to execute the laws against blasphemy, profane swearing and cursing, drunkenness and lewdness, and the profanation of the Lord's Day....'*<sup>101</sup> This was an obvious attempt to strike back at the sort of judicial laxness in law enforcement which had led to the formation of the reforming societies in the first instance. Coming hard on the heels of the Hartley affair, it was no doubt given a more immediate objective of countering the anti-reformation JPs on the Middlesex bench as well.

Important people knew of the petition's existence by early January 1692. Had the bishops presented it then, it might have staved off the regulation of the Middlesex bench which resulted in Hartley's expulsion of the 8th of that month. As Edward Harley lamented about Hartley's treatment by the Lords Commissioners of the Great Seal, *'the bishops presented not their petition ... whether some delayed it designedly is not yet known'*<sup>102</sup> Harley was unable to secure a copy of the document until 23. January and it took a further four days for the royal *Proclamation Against Vicious,*

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<sup>98</sup> EUL Laing MS III,394, pp. 201-10; Hartley and his friends charged no fee for issuing warrants, but JPs such as Henry Higden allowed their clerks to charge 12d., adding a financial disincentive to the threat of revenge if informers used existing enforcement procedures, *ibid.*, pp. 180-82.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 273-82, *passim*.

<sup>100</sup> BL Loan 29/185, fols. 255,274 (Edward Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 28 November and 27 December 1691).

<sup>101</sup> A copy is BL Loan 29/185, fol. 276.

<sup>102</sup> BL Loan 29/186, fol. 7 (Edward Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 9 January 1692).

*Debauched, and Profane Persons* to appear. By that time the reformation of manners campaign was in dire straits and some of the gentlemen reformers' lesser associates in London were already suffering reprisals for their previous zeal. It was especially the informers, the backbone of the reformation scheme for law enforcement, who were most vulnerable to attack in the general climate of reaction stemming from the expulsion of Hartley and the discrediting of his reformation work. As Edward Harley reported to his father in mid-January, *'the informers against vice are like to fall under great hardships. Some lewd villains having discovered where they meet ... have promised to direct the press masters where to find them, so they may be carried off to sea'*. Apparently this was not the first time the Royal Navy's insatiable need for manpower had been diverted against the reformers, since Harley reported that *'by these means, some of them were taken away last year and never heard of'*.<sup>103</sup> Their anonymity breached by the investigations of the anti-Hartley JPs, the informers were easy prey to threats and physical abuse.

The account of conditions following the reformers' reverses of January 1692 is drawn from documents which they compiled in self-justification and to illustrate that the hostile Middlesex JPs *'now having obtained their long wished for power and ruling without control, scarce any villainous practices how black soever but were protected by them'*. Though the charge of judicial malfeasance was coloured by partisan views, actions by central government in this area tend to support the reformers' claim that *'many good men, who before stood neuter, discovered their actions in their proper colours...'* The volume of *'real and just complaints daily ... made against them'* had the cumulative result that *'the government thought it not safe any longer to trust these men with the magisterial power'*.<sup>104</sup> Another regulation of the Commission of the Peace for Middlesex resulted, this time in favour of the gentlemen reformers of manners. So entrenched on the bench were some of these anti-reformation JPs, that governmental fiat alone could not at first dislodge them. As early as 14 January 1692 Secretary of State Nottingham ordered the Lords Commissioners of the Great Seal to remove John Robbins, JP for the Tower Division, from the bench.<sup>105</sup> Nothing was done about this for two months, for in the larger alteration ordered by Secretary of State Sydney on 3 March, Robbins still appeared in the list of men to be removed, together with anti-Hartley justices, Henry Higden, Ambrose Isted and Theophilus Eyton. The Crown's motives in making this substantial alteration of the Middlesex bench remain unknown, but the move clearly favoured the gentlemen of the First Society for Reformation of Manners since Sir Richard Bulkeley, Col. Maynard Colchester and Mr. William Yates were named as new JPs for the county.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., fol. 11 (same to same, 16 January 1692).

<sup>104</sup> EUL Laing MS III,394, pp. 210-12

<sup>105</sup> CSPD for 14 January 1692.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., for 3 March 1692.

Curiously, Ralph Hartley was not reinstated. Possibly because of his controversial, though probably blameless, recent past it was thought best not to risk antagonising the remaining Middlesex justices with his presence.

The Lords Commissioners of the Great Seal disregarded Secretary Sydney's directive of early March in favour of the gentlemen reformers of manners. A new list was not issued until a stern reminder came from the Earl of Nottingham on 7 April 1692.<sup>107</sup> There are several curious things about the changes which finally did take place on the Middlesex bench as a result of this. The list of anti-Hartley JPs deleted was highly selective and did not include powerful figures such as Sir Charles Lee or Sir Thomas Rowe. Some of the JPs to be removed managed to cling to office by promises of personal reformation. Theophilus Eyton survived in this way, but according to the reformers his contrition meant little since *'he did afterwards many ill things and when the town grew weary of him, got as far into every tradesman's debt as he could and borrowed money of those with whom he had any credit left, such as prison keepers, and some of his own servants, and then like a bankrupt tradesman he ran quite away.'*<sup>108</sup>

A similarly inglorious end awaited Ambrose Isted, *'an active man against the reformation'*. After his removal from the bench, Isted became despondent *'through shame to see his own ill doings thus detested, and ... the only men he hated exalted to the honour himself and others were deprived of'*. Despondency apparently led to mental instability, for by late June 1692 London buzzed with the news that the former JP and Master of the Stationers Company had *'in a melancholy fit shot himself into the head with a pistol and then died immediately'*.<sup>109</sup>

As for the other justices on the removal list, Higden emulated Eyton's promised reformation and remained on the bench. John Robbins was finally put out of Commission, but not until many months after the initial order against him of January 1692. Besides being *'a great stickler'* over the reformation of manners issue, Robbins was said to be a crypto-papist who hoped to see William of Orange *'served as Monmouth was'*. The mixture of political disloyalty thought to be inherent in Catholicism plus his hostility to reformation of manners doubtless led to Robbins' final exclusion from the bench.<sup>110</sup>

The primary stumbling block to the Crown's efforts to regulate the Middlesex Commission of the Peace in favour of the gentlemen reformers of manners was the intransigence of Commissioners Trevor and Hutchings. Queen Mary herself had to

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., for 7 April 1692. L. K. J. Glassey, *Politics and the Appointment of Justices of the Peace 1675-1720* (New York, 1979) p. 111 describes as 'laudable' the failure of the Lords Commissioners to expel the anti-reformation JPs.

<sup>108</sup> EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 212-13.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.; see also Anthony Wood, *Life and Times* III, p. 392; and Luttrell, *Brief Relation* II, p. 494.

<sup>110</sup> EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 213-20, passim. Another anti-Hartley JP, Thomas Harriott of Islington, was removed from the bench in June 1693 for the politically motivated act of reducing a non-juring clergyman's tax assessment without authority, see Luttrell, *Brief Relation*, III, p. 121.

intervene in the matter when informed of the delays by the Bishop of London, Henry Compton.<sup>111</sup> Even then it does not appear that Bulkeley, Colchester and Yates were on the bench of Middlesex justices by May 1692.<sup>112</sup> The first evidence from the Sessions Books shows Sir Richard Bulkeley sitting in June, followed in August by Maynard Colchester, though neither man appears in the official Commission of the Peace Roll until early December 1692. In other words almost a full year elapsed between the initial regulation by Secretary Nottingham in January 1692 and the appearance of the gentlemen reformers of manners as active members of the Middlesex bench. The intentional dilatoriness of at least two of the Lords Commissioners of the Great Seal in this matter may have been a contributing factor to the abolition of the Lords Commissioners in March 1693 and their replacement with Sir John Somers as Lord Keeper.<sup>113</sup>

Once on the Middlesex bench, what was the influence of these gentlemen founders of the First Society for Reformation of Manners? One of their first endeavours was to solicit favourable pronouncements about the reformation objectives from the government. A central figure here was Col. Maynard Colchester, a Gloucestershire squire whose concern for national piety and practical philanthropy placed him in 1698 among the founders of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. In 1693 Colchester's concern for furthering the objectives of the reformers of manners can be detected in the summons made by Lord Keeper Somers to the Middlesex justices of the peace in mid-May that they attend him and receive a charge to be more diligent in enforcing the laws against immorality and profanations of the Lord's Day.

Early in May 1693 the now Justice Colchester presented a letter with his intentions for Lord Somers to his friend William Lloyd the Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry.<sup>114</sup> Lloyd passed the letter to Archbishop Tenison and he promoted its intentions at Whitehall. This effort bore fruit when Queen Mary incorporated the essence of Colchester's letter in one of her own directed to the Middlesex bench of justices. In the absence of William campaigning on the Continent, Mary declared herself *'touched with a resentment that, notwithstanding ... great deliverances, our strict commands to the contrary and the care and diligence used by you ... the sins of profaning the Lord's Day, profane swearing and cursing, drunkenness, and other lewd and disorderly practices have not received so great a check, discountenance and punishment as they ought'*. On the contrary, the Queen declared, *'many of our subjects do still continue in such disorderly practices, though it tends to the ruin of themselves as well as of us and our kingdoms'*. The Queen went on to impress on the magistrates that she was *'steadfast ... to exert the utmost of our royal power for the remedy of these aforesaid evils, that we may expect increase of or continuance of the blessings we and our subjects enjoy....'* This was a clear statement of the

<sup>111</sup> CSPD for 22 April 1692

<sup>112</sup> MRO Sessions Book 498, fol. 3; 499, fol. 3; PRO, MJP/CP, 19a & 20

<sup>113</sup> Trevor was expelled from the Commons for bribery over the Orphans Bill in March 1695, but remained Master of the Rolls; Hutchings retained his place as King's Serjeant.

<sup>114</sup> EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 383-88, passim.

identification between visible law enforcement against immoralities and the continued enjoyment of God's favour by England in its domestic and foreign endeavours.

With particular reference to existing legislation, Queen Mary enjoined the Middlesex magistrates to employ their *'utmost diligence ... in taking care that the constables and other inferior officers (to whose negligence and connivance we cannot but impute the continuance in great measure of such disorders) behave themselves ... as they ought'*. A great encouragement to immorality was *'permitting persons (especially housekeepers and apprentices) to frequent alehouses and taverns on the Lord's Day as well out of sermon time as in it'*. Magistrates were ordered to stop this practice by any effectual means and the Queen's injunction was made more explicit when Lord Keeper Somers met the Middlesex magistrates on 16 May 1693 and directed them to act against tippling on the Lord's Day.<sup>115</sup> At their next Sessions of the Peace at Hicks's Hall, an Order to this effect was made and printed signed by Justice Colchester and a number of sympathetic colleagues such as John Perry, George Ford, William Withers, William Underhill and George Bohun.<sup>116</sup>

As was so often the case, the parochial officers were singled out as the chief impediment to efficient law enforcement. Their numbers were inadequate and their general morale so low that their reputation for laxity and peculation was often well deserved. Hardly the ideal remedy to apply against crimes which had no victim except the moral tenets of religion. Nevertheless the Middlesex magistrates stated their intention to *'discharge that great duty to which they stand obliged by their oaths, taking into serious consideration the effectual carrying on of a reformation of manners by the due punishment of ... crimes and offences in all parts of this county'*.<sup>117</sup> Parochial officers were instructed to crack down on Sunday drinking by servants and apprentices in alehouses and all profaners of the Lord's Day who played sports or otherwise carried on their usual occupations.<sup>118</sup> The officers were further ordered to inform on any colleague who connived at law breaking. This, coupled with the magistrates' direction that inferior officers appear before the bench at the next General Sessions and produce lists of offending alehouse keepers and vintners, shows that Colchester and his like-minded colleagues were trying to introduce the same sort of rigour into official law enforcement machinery that the reformers of manners sought with their system of informers and warrant registers.

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<sup>115</sup> MRO Sessions Book 505, fol. 41. Woodward, *Religious Societies*, p. 82 claimed this initiative testified to the failure of the proclamation of 21 January 1692 to achieve its objectives.

<sup>116</sup> *op cit.*, fols. 41-42; see also EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 415-20, an undertaking by Middlesex magistrates to encourage informers.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 394-95.

<sup>118</sup> This was not an innovation, but a strict interpretation of 1 Jac.I, cap. 9 (1604) *An Act to Restrain the inordinate Haunting and Tippling in Inns, Alehouses, and other Victualling Houses* which defined these places as conveniences for travellers, and *'not meant for entertainment and harbouring of lewd and idle people to spend and consume their money and their time ...'*

This effort was not without success, for some constables and other officers publicly acknowledged '*a deep sense of the duty to which we are severally bound by our oaths*' and entered into an agreement '*for the encouragement and assistance of ourselves and others in the easier performance ... of reformation of manners in this city*'.<sup>119</sup> Admitting that lesser officers were often guilty of negligence and connivance, these constables agreed to meet every Tuesday afternoon at Hamlin's Coffee House by the Royal Exchange to consider the best means of putting the laws, proclamations and sessions orders into execution.<sup>120</sup>

In order to put themselves solidly on the side of expert legal opinion, these constables put several queries to the eminent Serjeant-at-Law, Francis Pemberton, concerning the limits of their authority. Pemberton's replies are a useful gauge of established legal thought in this area. In the first query, the constables sought advice about proceedings against offenders under the statute 29 Charles II, cap. 7 prohibiting exercising one's usual calling, or travelling or selling goods on Sundays. Could a constable on his own authority without a JP's warrant order an offender before a magistrate? And what of statutes made against Sunday sports, cursing and swearing? How much independent authority did constables have in enforcing these? Serjeant Pemberton's replies completely vindicated the independent authority of constables to act against such offences if the constable actually observed the wrong doing.<sup>121</sup> But, Pemberton added, constables could not act upon the information of third parties alone. An information would have to be sworn first before a magistrate who would issue a warrant against the accused in the usual manner for execution by a constable.

In their second query the constables were concerned with cash payments from offenders who wished to be spared being taken before a justice of the peace. In his answer Serjeant Pemberton must have taken account of the constant rumours circulating about constables involved in reformation work that they risked the threat of prosecution to extort money from offenders. Though affirming their legal right to take the penalty prescribed by the statute 'on the spot', Pemberton urged great discretion in this area so that the payment could not be viewed by the offender as bribery. There should be proper witnesses to the payment, which should be given over to the parish officials as soon as possible.

The concluding query concerned a long-standing impediment to the effectiveness of parish officers who wished to operate in a truly metropolitan campaign against vice, namely their right to act outside their own parish or ward. On this question Serjeant Pemberton was less supportive to the reforming constables. They were legally confined to their particular constablewicks or wards and could not leave except to

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<sup>119</sup> Bodl. Rawlinson MS D. 129, fols. 28-31; a very similar account is EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 473-79.

<sup>120</sup> Op. cit., fols. 32-35; *ibid.*, pp. 481-88.

<sup>121</sup> This proved to be '*a very advisable and successful method for ... suppressing ... swearing, when private persons are negligent in giving of informations, and the magistrate is careless in his duty*', *Account of the Societies for Reformation of Manners in England and Ireland*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 1701, pp. 9-10.



apprehend an offender, unless the offence took place in their area but the lawbreaker fled into an adjoining jurisdiction. In this case the constable could take the offender before the nearest JP, not necessarily the one serving the area where the crime occurred. An exception to this geographical restriction was that City of London constables were given customary leave to operate in any ward or parish of the City. But unless this right existed elsewhere, constables were confined to their own parishes.

Two more undertakings to further a reformation of manners can be detected stemming from the encouragements the Queen and Lord Keeper gave to the Middlesex magistrates in May 1693. By early June some pious gentlemen in the capital were sufficiently motivated by developments to form themselves into a body *'for promoting the execution of the laws made against profaneness and debauchery'*. Reasoning that *'the advancement of the honour and service of Almighty God by suppressing sin and vice ought to be the chief care and concern of governors and magistrates and the sincere endeavour of all persons in their several stations'*, these gentlemen proclaimed themselves supporters of all official efforts towards a reformation of manners. As their number included men of rank such as Edward Harley, younger brother of the future minister, it seems likely that their contribution was probably financial and supportive on a respectable level rather than interventionist in the sense of hauling offenders before magistrates. Their surviving MS regulations give no hint of extra-legal or factional intentions and are concerned with procedure at meetings, admission of suitable new members, secrecy of deliberations, and pious recommendations not to meddle with affairs of Church or State.<sup>122</sup>

The third undertaking in the summer of 1693 originated lower down the social scale from Edward Harley's friends and came from the Tower Hamlets district. This grouping was really a 'second generation' reformation society incorporating both the experiences of local vigilante activity against bawdy houses of the sort described in the 1690 broadside *Antimoixeia* and the lessons learned from the overzealousness of Ralph Hartley in 1691.<sup>123</sup> The Tower Hamlets associators placed most emphasis on developing effective machinery for punishing offenders, rather than attempting to effect a comprehensive moral reformation amongst all classes of people. The offences concentrated on were the familiar ones of profanations of the Lord's Day as well as swearing and cursing, public lewdness and prostitution. The names of these reformers can only be inferred (see below), but we can guess at their numbers since a quorum of twelve members was needed to transact business at their monthly meetings and an executive committee of nine was chosen each month to direct the society's affairs. These committee men met weekly at Dewins Coffee House near the

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<sup>122</sup> Bodl. Rawlinson MS D. 129, fols. 1-2 and EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 409-13 dated 8 June 1693 and bearing the following names: Edward Harley, John Birch, John Smith, Joselyn Roberts, Thomas Hunt, Thomas Trent, Dormer Shephard, Arthur Shallett, Abraham Rolfe, Nehemiah Lyde and Thomas Carpenter.

<sup>123</sup> The society is described in Bodl. Rawlinson MS D. 129, fols. 16-27 and EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 447-72.

Royal Exchange, near the rendezvous of the reforming constables' society, to inspect the accounts of *'the collectors and other persons employed'*. The Tower Hamlets reforming society also devised a scheme for monitoring the efficiency of parish officers. Each year four stewards were chosen for each City parish and two for each adjoining parish whose business it was *'to enquire into the behaviour of the constables and other officers....'* These stewards also collected the subscriptions of the society's members, but the raw material for a significant portion of the society's business was provided by two men employed *'to search out houses of lewdness and bawdry and persons that haunt them in order to their legal prosecution, conviction and punishment'*. These paid investigators operated under strict rules and reported directly to the committee of nine members, clearly showing that this Tower Hamlets society sought to avoid any of the legal wrangles over procedure in prosecuting offenders which had damaged the reformation campaign during the Ralph Hartley affair a few years earlier.

The society's paid investigators were instructed as follows:

1. *That they begin to prosecute no offender unless for swearing, cursing and drunkenness till they have acquainted the committee with his or her name, usual place of abode and crime - as also what evidence they have against them. But if the case requires haste, then they are to apply for directions to any two of the committee and to follow their advice.*
2. *That when any offender is brought before a magistrate, they endeavour to get the constable or other inferior officer bound over to give evidence against the criminal in case they themselves are bound to prosecute.*
3. *That they give timely notice to the committee of all trials a convenient time before, that some of the stewards may be present at the trials.*
4. *That they give an account of the success of each prosecution at the next meeting of the committee.*
5. *That they keep a journal of every day's business in a book divided into several columns, setting down the offenders' names, the particular places of their usual abode, their crimes, the officers' names and parish that take up the offenders, the magistrates before whom they are brought, and the success of their prosecution.*
6. *That they take no money upon any account whatsoever of those they prosecute. And they are to take a particular care never to inform against those they have had any personal difference or quarrel with.*
7. *That they, observing these instructions and such other directions as they shall from time to time receive in writing from the committee, we do agree to pay each of them weekly for their service ... and do all we can legally to save them harm in all their just and warrantable proceedings.*

8. *They are desired to improve all opportunities of informing against those that are guilty of swearing, cursing, drunkenness and profanations of the Lord's Day.*<sup>124</sup>

In the Tower Hamlets reforming society one can see a self-sufficient unit with its own revenue sources, administrative structure and monitoring scheme to check on the efficiency of parochial officers, as well as paid investigators to initiate prosecutions. Its links with the gentlemen reformers either on the Middlesex bench of justices or in the First Society for Reformation of Manners were probably indirect and not formalised. This reflected the reformation campaign in the capital as a whole in the early years of the 1690s. Those 'at the top' whether active in a judicial and propaganda way such as Justices Colchester, Bulkeley or Yates, or allied well-wishers like Edward Harley, set the example for reformation activity and encouraged its development through their social contacts and their purses. The reformation activity participated in by those lower down the social scale evolved on an *ad hoc* basis, largely in response to local conditions or in response to some official statement such as a royal proclamation or sessions order.<sup>125</sup> It would be a mistake, therefore, to assume that the arrangement of reforming societies spread over the metropolis of which pamphlets of the late 'nineties spoke with pride, was constructed to a pre-existing plan. Some had closer links with the First Society or with each other - because of geography or type of membership - which others lacked. They were all animated by the same desire, however, to put existing laws into execution against immorality and profanations of the Lord's Day both to ensure England's domestic harmony and the survival of the new order embodied by William and Mary.

Within this evolving scheme of reforming societies, the Tower Hamlets society seems to have taken an honoured place and it is worthwhile to trace this development and in the process attempt to identify some of its members. A printed account survives for the year 1694 describing the work of *'the society engaged in the prosecution of profaneness and debauchery'* which parallel evidence strongly suggests can be identified with the Tower Hamlets society and the reformers 'figuring in one of the first public statements of the effectiveness of reformation tactics in procuring prosecutions and convictions.

Early in 1694 John Dunton, printer-bookseller and editor of the *Athenian Mercury*, published a substantial licensed pamphlet *Proposals for a National Reformation of Manners, humbly offered to the Consideration of our Magistrates and Clergy*. An appendix, *The Black Roll*, contained *'the names and crimes of several hundred persons who have been prosecuted by the society, for whoring, drunkenness and sabbathbreaking'* the previous year. About 80% of these were women prosecuted for either keeping or frequenting bawdy houses. A MS account for 1694 also exists of *'the society engaged in the prosecution of prophaneness and debauchery'* which

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<sup>124</sup> Op. cit., fols. 25-27.

<sup>125</sup> See for example the 'Agreement of Divers Officers and Inhabitants of St. Katherine's by the Tower ... against Profaneness', EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 395-98 dated 30 October 1694 and signed by 32 men.

lists one of the society's expenses as '*printing the Black Roll*'.<sup>126</sup> The MS account also bears the names of a committee of nine men, plus a clerk, the same number as conducted the business of the Tower Hamlet society, plus other similarities such as payments made to two investigators and a journal recording details of offenders and prosecutions. If the society described by these two sources is the same, then we can be certain of the names of its committee in December 1694: James Jenkins, Bodenham Rewse, John Cadman, Thomas Sherman, Thomas Dymock, John Lane, Daniel Fox, Samuel Bayley, and Richard Scudamore.

Of the social standing of these men little is known, with the exception of Bodenham Rewse who, because of his membership of a religious society interested in the reformation cause, is identified elsewhere in MS sources as an embroiderer working in York Buildings, Villiers Street, off the Strand.<sup>127</sup> During 1694, Rewse and his colleagues paid out nearly £300 in the course of the society's work, of which about £200 was defrayed from contributions made by '*several bishops, Church and Nonconformist ministers, and divers worthy gentlemen and citizens of London*'. The clerk and the paid investigators shared between them £179 in fees and expenses; a further £80 went on indicting and bringing to trial several difficult criminals; and diligent constables and printing costs including *The Black Roll* consumed a further £37 10s.<sup>128</sup> These were not inconsiderable sums of money in contemporary terms and they testify to the level of activity of this group. One can, therefore, with some justification, project this level of activity forward several years to 1699 when *An Account of the Societies for Reformation of Manners in England and Ireland* identified one of the most active reforming societies in London as consisting of '*about fifty persons, tradesmen and others*' who specialised in prosecuting keepers and frequenters of bawdy and disorderly houses and published lists of offenders brought to justice.<sup>129</sup>

Whether or not such identifications between reforming groups mentioned in diverse sources can be proved, their existence nevertheless illustrates the successful outcome of the struggles engaged in by the gentlemen reformers such as Bulkeley, Hartley, Yates and Colchester in the early 'nineties. The idea of reformation of manners was finding form in both official pronouncements and voluntary associations. It is now necessary to consider more carefully the type of person who interested himself in such projects and the links which existed between reformers of manners and the religious societies in London.

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<sup>126</sup> EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 507-10, dated 24 December 1694.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240; see also Bodl. Rawlinson MS D. 1312, fol. 16.

<sup>128</sup> EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 507-10, *passim*

<sup>129</sup> 5th Ed., 1701: pp. 8-9.

## CHAPTER THREE

### REFORMERS OF MANNERS AND THEIR LONDON ALLIES

Confusion has always existed in previous studies of the reformers of manners over the role played in the reforming movement by the young men of the Church of England religious societies. This chapter seeks to untangle the relationship, and identify the religious societies in London which co-operated with the reformers. Approaches to the Dissenters are also discussed in the light of the informing work done by members of religious societies. Finally, the adherence of prominent individuals such as Thomas Firmin and a group of pro-reformation Middlesex JPs is illustrated from contemporary sources.

Prominent reformers of manners such as Edward Harley were forthright in stating that many informers belonged to religious societies – young men of the Established Church meeting '*to pray and sign psalms ... twice a week*' around London.<sup>130</sup> The nature of the relationship between religious societies and reforming societies, however, has been clouded by the authority of works such as Josiah Woodward's *Account of the Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies ... and of their Endeavours for Reformation of Manners* and contemporary 'histories' such as Gilbert Burnet's.

Josiah Woodward was the principal apologist for the religious societies begun in Charles II's time and fostered by eminent Anglican divines such as Anthony Horneck, William Smithies and William Beveridge. A popular London preacher and supporter of practical philanthropy, Woodward had no demonstrable connection with the principals of the reformation societies until the late 1690s, by which time the reformation movement had softened somewhat its earlier 'shock troops against vice' approach. His 1697 *Account* reached a third edition by 1701 and sought to enhance the pedigree of the religious societies as the guardians of Anglican devotion during the dark days of the last Stuarts and as fonts of practical piety after 1688 which overflowed into the channel of a campaign of law enforcement to achieve a reformation of manners. He completely subordinated the efforts of prominent reformers such as Bulkeley, Colchester, Yates and their associates to the spontaneous reforming initiatives of the young men of the religious societies.<sup>131</sup>

Bishop Burnet's *History of His Own Time* echoes this when tracing the development of the religious societies from 1688 and ascribing to them the practice of furnishing magistrates with information about immoralities. Because of this practice, Burnet remarked, '*they were called societies for reformation*'.<sup>132</sup> Burnet is correct about the informing function, but misleading in his 'evolutionary' explanation of it and this has

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<sup>130</sup> BL Loan 29/186, fol. 11 (Edward Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 11 January 1692).

<sup>131</sup> 2nd ed. (1698) p. 65ff

<sup>132</sup> (Oxford, 1823) V, p. 18

been repeated in much later writing on the subject.<sup>133</sup> Contemporary MS sources and the accounts of other observers of the London scene enable a more accurate pattern of interest in reformation of manners work to be constructed.

During his visit to London in 1689-90, the Scottish Episcopalian clergyman Robert Kirk visited and described religious societies meeting at St. Clement Dane's and St. Lawrence Jewry in the City of London. "*There be two societies*", he wrote, "*where about sixty in each contribute for daily prayers, and meet one hour twice a week for conference about cases of conscience, questions of divinity to be resolved, advice for advancing trade, getting a maintenance, helping the sick of their society visiting and exhorting them, and the like*". The societies' members were "*all young men, apprentices of divers trades, exemplary in piety and virtue*".<sup>134</sup> Kirk's inclusion of strictly secular concerns such as promotion of trade during the proceedings of these societies has no parallel in Woodward's larger and later account which mentions nothing about membership of a religious society as having such material 'spin offs'. This discrepancy is a further reason for not accepting Woodward's account of the religious societies' adoption of reforming activities at face value.

Certainly the reformers of manners themselves would have agreed with Woodward that the religious society members were '*very instrumental in promoting this reformation of manners*'.<sup>135</sup> Promotion and initiation are separate things and the central questions to be answered are: (1) how were these young men first involved with reformation work and at what periods were they most active, and (2) what type of assistance in particular did they give to the law enforcement campaign in London?

Woodward answered both questions at once by stating that the young men spontaneously '*formed themselves into two considerable bodies, for informing against public enormities, the one in London, and the other in Westminster*' and he implied that this occurred very soon after Bishop Stillingfleet persuaded Queen Mary to write her letter of 10 July 1691 to the Middlesex magistrates.<sup>136</sup> The MSS compiled by the reformers give a different story. Here it is argued that the uproar and general discouragement to law enforcement using informers following upon the judicial attack against Ralph Hartley and his friends caused many religious society members to desert the cause of the gentlemen reformers. The initial enthusiasm of these Anglican apprentices waned in the dark days of late 1691. Their societies disavowed any help to the reforming campaign and concentrated solely on pursuing personal piety. Only after the worst period had passed and the gentlemen reformers were actually appointed JPs for Middlesex in the spring of 1692 did the reformers

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<sup>133</sup> Eg. B. Kirkman Gray, *History of English Philanthropy* (1905) and J. Wickham Legg, 'London Church services in the Reign of Queen Anne', *Trans. St. Paul's Ecclesiological Society*, VI (1906-10). Dr. W. A. Speck's paper 'The Societies for reformation of Manners' read at the Lancaster University conference on 'Religion and Society in the 17th and 18th Centuries' in January 1975 also accepted Bishop Burnet's explanation.

<sup>134</sup> EUL Laing MS III, 545, fol. 153.

<sup>135</sup> EUL Laing MS III, 394, p. 323.

<sup>136</sup> Woodward, *Religious Societies* (2nd ed., 1698), p. 72.

think the time was right '*that the ... societies of young men ... should be again spoken to in order to their promoting this noble work*'.<sup>137</sup> Even so, it was not until October 1692 that the London religious societies received a letter from the gentlemen of the First Society for Reformation of Manners exhorting them to rejoin the movement and answering their objections to the whole law enforcement undertaking. Only then did the young men meet and form themselves into the two bodies, one in the City and the other in Lincoln's Inn Fields, as described by Woodward.<sup>138</sup> Their formal existence dates therefore from the end of 1692 and not from the reformation movement's genesis in the summer of 1691.

A MS list survives giving the location and meeting times of nineteen religious societies in London whose members received the letter from the reformers in October 1692.<sup>139</sup> Drawn up in 1691, this list probably represents the majority of such groups then existing in London, for by 1698 Woodward states that their total number within the Bills of Mortality had grown only to thirty-two societies.<sup>140</sup> It is interesting to note that in the following list of meeting places, most seem to have been public houses, probably reflecting the fact that abstinence from drink was not included in the otherwise strict regime of personal discipline followed by members of the religious societies. Too much that was advantageous in the way of social and commercial intercourse occurred in public houses of the time for young men of this sort, however pious, to shun them entirely.<sup>141</sup>

The religious societies receiving the reformers' letter in October 1692 were :

MEETING TIME	MEETING PLACE
Sunday night	The Five Bells, Duke's Street
do.	The Camel and Horseshoe, Leadenhall Street
do.	In Westminster, near King's Street
do.	The Lion and Axe, College Hill
do.	In Fleet Lane
Monday night	The Duke's Head, Lincoln's Inn Fields
do.	In Fleet Lane
do.	At Mr. Bull's, Monmouth Street
Tuesday night	The Five Bells, Duke's Street
do.	The Coach and Horses, Wood Street
do.	In Fleet Lane
Wednesday night	The Five Bells, Duke's Street
do.	At the Vestry in Wapping Chapel
Thursday night	The Camel and Horseshoe, Leadenhall Street
do.	The Eagle and Child, St. Martin's le Grand
do.	The Five Bells, Duke's Street
do.	In Beaufort Street, in the Strand
do.	The Feathers, Stocks Market

<sup>137</sup> EUL Laing MS III, 394, p. 324.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 359; cf. Woodward, p. 72.

<sup>139</sup> EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 325-28.

<sup>140</sup> Woodward, *Religious Societies*, p. 63.

<sup>141</sup> Rules for a religious society meeting at Romney, Kent, in the late 1690s (Folger Add. MS 109, p. 10) cautioned '*be no more in ale houses and taverns than necessary business requires*'. My thanks to Dr. H. T. Dickinson of Edinburgh University for transcribing this MS for me.

The text of the October 1692 letter survives in MS and since it embodies the essential arguments advanced by the reformers of manners at this stage of the development of their law enforcement campaign, it is given here in its entirety:<sup>142</sup>

*My Christian Friends,*

*The miseries under which this nation has for a long time groaned is so sensibly felt by all, and the still severe judgements threatening us and impending over our heads are so visible to most, that to go about to persuade men to believe it would be as needless as to study arguments to prove that it is the sun enlightens the day or that his absence causes the night; and the cause hereof, viz. the public wickedness of the people, is without doubt as visible to you as the effect, for the profane and unthinking part of mankind do not see that 'tis God that punishes nations when they trample on his law. But to you (who I hope make it your business to study and obey his will) it cannot but be evident and without doubt that sense hereof that induced some of you not long since to engage so heartily in that noble undertaking of suppressing vice, a work so truly great as it aims not at private ends, but a general good which, if gone through with, will prove a greater security to the nation than a numerous armed host or all her naval forces. But, my friends, to see so few of you encourage the best cause that ever men engaged in looks but with a melancholy aspect. What is become of your zeal for the glory of God, the good of his church, and that love to your country without which a man cannot at any rate be accounted either brave or generous?*

*I have hitherto looked upon you as persons of public spirits that designed the good of others and endeavoured it above the common stingy temper of the great part of mankind who care not how the world goes [so long as] they may advance their ends, men who can see even their own interests no further than the present tense, and think of no such thing as future happiness, men who, in a word, are dead members of the public, insensible of pain when the whole body is racked with convulsions, who rather deserve the name of brutes than rational creatures. The desire of happiness is a principle flowing necessarily from the very frame of our natures; and man, being a sociable creature, cannot be happy alone, his music sounds best in consort. If the public be blessed with prosperity, I cannot but be a sharer thereof; and if, on the contrary, it be overwhelmed with adversity, I, as a member of the same body, must needs be involved therein. For though mine own innocence may secure me a safe retreat after death, yet it will not protect me from a common calamity. Nations, as they are distinct communities, cannot be punished in another state, so that God is by his justice obliged to punish them here. We often see private men, though wicked, to prosper in this life because God refers their punishments to another. But if we make enquiry into history, we shall not find any people generally and publicly profane, but*

<sup>142</sup> EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 329-58.



*we shall likewise find some eminent judgement hath been executed on them. It is true the restraining of profane swearing, etc., will not ordinarily make the persons so restrained ever the more religious, but it will take away the public guilt. The public shall not suffer for the private sins of private persons, but for those crimes as are liable to be punished by the magistrate's authority and are not.*

*It is open profaneness that brings God's judgements on a nation, because - by the commission thereof on the one hand, and the permission thereof on the other - it becomes that guilt not only of him that acts, but of him that might prevent-it and would not see that with good reason it is observed as a rule in the civil law that religio contaminam ad omnium pertinent injuriam. [trans. "The abuse of religion is to be looked upon as a common injury"] and every man is concerned to endeavour a vindication thereof. The open profaneness of the age does without doubt afford great affliction to those who have a due sense thereof (Rivers of tears run down mine eyes because men keep not thy law, saith David) and men being necessarily outlined to seek their own quiet, that which gives them occasion of trouble they cannot but be desirous to remove, for the avoiding evils to be reckoned under the notion of good, so that when a man can lawfully rid himself thereof, he will with all readiness do it.*

*If then in this affair we act but as prudent men would in their temporal consciences, we should exert our utmost diligence to bring to condign punishment (that being the only way to prevent) those crimes which cause us so much grief, and which, if winked at a little longer, will in all probability not only ruin the criminals themselves, but even us to respect of our temporals.*

#### First Objection.

*But it is objected that force is not to be used in matters of religion. To which I answer (in the words of Bishop Wilkins) that whatsoever disputes have been raised concerning the lawfulness of punishing men for their dissenting consciences in matters of religion, yet never any man questioned the lawfulness of punishing men for their profaneness and contempting all religion. Such men as renounce conscience cannot pretend that they suffer for it. It is an observation of Seneca, that several countries do appoint several punishments for that violation of religion, but every country appoints some, and it does not anywhere escape unpunished. It is true charity is the badge of Christianity. And is that man uncharitable to his own body who suffers a member thereof to be cut and lanced to prevent a gangrene? It is foolish pity and will be found cruelty to favour profane wretches in their impieties, and thereby not only involve them in greater evils than the legal punishments of their crimes would have been, but the whole nation in misery.*

#### Second Objection.

*Others object that it is not the business of private persons, but of magistrates and public officers. To which I answer that magistrates are judges to examine complaints and give sentence against offenders which they cannot do without information; for it*

*is unreasonable to think they should punish that which they know not of. And though officers should do their utmost in this affair, they could not be everywhere, and so not take cognizance of all offences that with good reason the Queen's letter, the Order of Sessions thereon, not only oblige them, but desire others to do their parts in their several stations by timely informations and prosecutions. And parish officers not being always chosen because they are the best men, but rather the richest or oldest inhabitants, we cannot reasonably hope they should perform what (if they generally acted on a principle of justice and piety) might be expected from them. So the danger is greater by reason of their neglect and ought to excite us to a double diligence, especially considering the law will not only defend us herein, but the government encourage us. And I hope what has already been said in respect of the natural obligations on every man to seek the good of the community wherein he dwells does sufficiently prove endeavouring to avert those judgements which threaten the nation to be both our duty and interest which cannot be done out suppressing those vices which call so, loudly for vengeance, nor that except we give due and timely informations of them to the magistrates. To omit this is doing violence to those inborn principles that necessarily oblige us to seek our own happiness which cannot consist without that of the public.*

### Third Objection

*It is to this objected that an informer is a scandalous name. But why so? Where is the harm of the word? Shall a mere sound fright us from so great an undertaking? It is not the name [that] is odious, but those persons who were formerly distinguished by that name. But the great apparent difference there is in the business [of informing] will sufficiently distinguish us from them; that though we have the same nomination, yet we shall be free from their just reproach. And shall a Christian be afraid of being instrumental in reforming, and by that means of securing, the kingdom for fear of being called an informer when our Saviour has said they are blessed whom men shall revile, and say all manner of evil of for his name's sake?*

### Fourth Objection.

*But that which most affrights men from [informing] is that, being tradesmen they run the hazard of losing their business. And what in the name of goodness is become of that charity which was primitively so eminent in the possessors of Christianity that the heathen amongst whom they lived were wont in admiration to say 'See how these Christians love one another'? St. Paul would wish himself accursed from God and Moses to be blotted out of his book for their countrymen's sake. And shall we be afraid of a small private inconvenience for the good of the public in the happiness whereof we cannot but be happy? Shall we be so pusillanimous as to be afraid of little private dangers because they are present than of great public evils because they are further and at a distance, as that soldier who more dreads the present danger of fighting when he is obliged thereto than the future of suffering by martial law for running away, may justly be esteemed a notorious coward? So may that man*

*who is afraid of a present inconvenience than of a further mischief from the revenging judgements of God upon the whole nation when, on the other hand, he that exposes himself to the utmost storm and hatred of the enraged vassals of Hell will find an extraordinary Providence to support him and strange comforts under the greatest dejections. And though perhaps he may miss of his end here, he shall not fail of the reward of his labours hereafter.*

*Men may probably make a nine days wonder of it, yet finding their flouts are returned upon themselves while the generous spirit is unmoved therewith will dissolve them into fear and respect. And if it shall please God so to bless our undertaking as to end in the full reformation of the age, how will all men then reverence and esteem those who were the happy instruments thereof. That consequently if we would be easy in not, concerning ourselves therewith, we must necessarily expect to be miserable in the public calamities which the crimes we seem to allow will bring upon us. And if we now suffer some small trouble in the prosecution thereof, we shall not only have the satisfaction of having done our endeavours, but very probably shall see the work effected and the nation being thereby happy. We shall enjoy not the smallest share of her prosperity, and a general and hearty engagement herein would be so far from exposing us that it would make men afraid of opposing it and even ashamed of those things they now glory in. After all, there's no such mighty danger in the thing as is supposed, especially if you act with prudence and caution. For it is proposed that such of you as are willing for to engage herein should meet once a week at such a place as shall be agreed on, where he that lives in one place may inform his friend that lives in some place remote from him what persons in his neighbourhood are addicted to swearing, etc., and of the houses they frequent and the usual times of their frequenting them, so that none shall inform against his neighbours, but against persons that live at a distance from him and who, if he were to come face to face, would not know him and consequently do him no harm. And if you should meet with any affront or abuse in the vindication hereof, you will have justice done you by the legal and exemplary punishment of such as offer you any injury.*

*The places at present proposed for these meetings are at Mr. Watts's in Duke Street, near Lincoln's Inn Fields, on Friday nights at seven for those in that part of town, and on Monday nights at the [religious] society's room in Wood Street, over against the Compter, for those in the City. I hope a concern of so great importance which may be done with so much security will move you to do something therein, especially considering that, of what moment soever that undertaking be, we cannot probably expect it should be done any other way, for without a society for giving informations it cannot be done, and if you espouse it not, I know not who will. So that if the cause miscarry for want of undertakers, it will lie at your doors, and this you will certainly have to answer for: that the reformation, and thereby the security of the nation, was once put in your hands, but you neglected it.*

*And give me leave further to tell you, Sirs, that as brave as the design is, if we let it fall now, we have little reason to expect it should ever take life again in this age at*

*least. For those worthy persons who have now engaged themselves therein will be so much discouraged by such a sudden failure as they will scarce have heart to begin it again, and others, how well soever they may affect the cause, will, remembering the ineffectual essays of these men, be altogether disheartened from undertaking it anew. When, on the other hand, if it be continued now it is afoot, it will, in God's time when the government be settled in peace, put those who sit at the helm to take a more particular notice thereof, and leisure permitting them, to set effectually about it so that though our faint attacks may not break down the strongholds of our adversaries, yet we may - like the first scouts of any army by our picketing- - bring the whole to an engagement. If this epistle have its desired effects, I doubt not but that next night's meeting at the above said places will. Demonstrate it by a numerous appearance of you there. Which, that it may, I commit it and you to the God of love and peace, who is able to make you perfect in every good work and to whom be glory forever. Amen.*

*I am your most affectionate brother and servant in Christ*

*(unsigned)*

*October the 11th, 1692.*

This letter was effective in re-inspiring the reformation resolve of the Anglican religious societies and spurred their members to form themselves into two large bodies for the purpose of giving informations to the magistrates against immoral and profane persons. Altogether it seems that one hundred and fifty young men involved themselves *'in giving informations and otherwise advancing this great work'*.<sup>143</sup> The rules followed by the informing society meeting on Monday nights survive and clearly state the purpose as *'being solely to promote the glory of God by the reformation of men's manners .... '* Secrecy of the society's proceedings and anonymity of informing were enshrined in these rules. The society functioned from premises close by the Wood Street Compter in the City where convicted offenders could be confined, and as a precaution against reprisals an informer was forbidden to denounce persons from his own neighbourhood. If an offence was observed, two other society members from another area were sent to observe the situation and if another breach of the law occurred, bring an information to a magistrate and secure his warrant against the swearer, drunkard or profaner of the Lord's Day.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 368

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., pp. 359-64 passim. The statute 21 Jac. I, cap. 20 requiring two witnesses to convict for profane swearing was altered by 6&7 William III, cap. 11 (1695) to one witness, at the urging of reformation sympathisers. The Romney religious society (Folger MS op. cit., p. 15) rules urged members *'to contribute whatever they are able towards the punishment of public profaneness, according to the laws of the land, that they may never be guilty of winking at sin and standing neuter in God's cause'*

In the actual practice of informing, these religious society members followed several '*prudential methods*' recommended by the gentlemen directing the reformation campaign in London. These in general cautioned restraint in doubtful situations. '*Prudence and caution*' were counselled where drunkenness was suspected, though informers were told that '*a man that cannot stand upon his legs, or that reels or staggers as he goes along the streets, and is heard to falter remarkably in his speech, unless in case of some known natural infirmity or defect, may ordinarily be presumed to be drunk*'. The exact words used in an oath or curse should be remembered, informers were instructed, '*that they may be able to repeat them if it be required*' by the magistrate. Though permitting people to tipple in alehouses was punishable on any day, the informers were advised only to '*take notice of what is done on the Lord's Day*', as well as looking out for other profanations on that day such as exercising one's ordinary calling and publicly exposing goods to sale.<sup>145</sup>

Working or selling goods on Sundays was not always easy to determine and religious society informers received detailed advice on how to proceed in such matters. '*Bakers appearing in the streets with their baskets, or barbers with their pot, basin, or periwig box; shoemakers, tailors, hatters, or other tradesmen*' were liable to prosecution for Sabbath-breaking, as was any manual worker except when doing acts of necessity or mercy. As far as selling was concerned, the informers were told that some vendors with cellar premises or perishable merchandise might have a legitimate reason to have their doors open on Sundays to admit light and air. Otherwise displaying goods which might be sold, even though no actual selling was observed, was still grounds for prosecution. Informers were strictly warned not to provoke breaches of the law themselves for the sake of convicting an offender, even an habitual one. And this admonition of discretion was coupled with a final one always to give informations in writing as soon after the offence was observed as possible, so that '*in all their applications to the magistrates, they behave themselves ... with deference and respect*'.<sup>146</sup>

The identities and occupations of some of the informers belonging to religious societies can be discovered by comparing various MS sources and collating the results.<sup>147</sup> The following list contains names of members of the informing society meeting on Monday nights in Wood Street by the Compter in the City. The names are grouped under the religious society they attended in 1694.

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<sup>145</sup> The instructions are contained in the anonymous and frequently reprinted pamphlet *Some Prudential Methods that have been recommended to those that give Informations against Profaneness and Debauchery in and about the Cities of London and Westminster, and other Parts of the Kingdom, and particularly to the Members of the several Religious Societies that have engaged in the business of Reformation*. (n. d. ), passim

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 365-68, a 1692 list of men pledging themselves to be informers; Bodl. Rawlinson MS D. 1312, membership lists of fifteen London religious societies in 1694. Nine of the fifteen societies are represented on the list of informers.

### **Sunday night's society meeting at Mr. Thomas Warren's in Leadenhall Street**

1. Thomas Hoar, at the Bluebell against the Monument, (Fishmonger)
2. Richard Goodchild. near St. Mary Overy's Dock, Southwark, (Bricklayer)
3. Peter Wiseman, at Mr. Wiseman's, Little Carter Lane (? apprentice)
4. Samuel Mercer, at Mr. Houghton's, Coleman St., (Carpenter)
5. Thomas Brian, at Mr. Brocket's, King's Head Yard, New Fish Street Hill, (Tinman)

### **Sunday night's society meeting at Mr. Watt's at the Five Bells in Duke's Street near Lincoln's Inn Fields**

1. Charles Williams, at the Sugar Loaf, Little Jermyn St., St. James's, Westminster (Master Grocer)
2. William Britton, Hungerford St. near the Strand (Master Butcher)
3. Henry Courthope, clerk to Mr. Samuel Buck of Hatton Garden (Gentleman)
4. George Birch, at the Sugar Loaf, Exeter St., (Master Tailor)
5. Richard Smith, New Street near Fetter Lane (Master Bookbinder)
6. John Barrett, no address (Tailor)

### **Tuesday night's society meeting at Mr. Watt's at the Five Bells**

1. Stephen Watts, the Five Bells, Duke's Street (Founder)
2. John Norris, Sermon St., St. James's Westminster (Joiner)
3. Thomas Scott, near Alley Street, Newmarket (Butterman)
4. Thomas Green, in Witch Alley, Witch Street (Carver)
5. William Livard, at the Duke's Head, Duke's Street (Barber and Perfumer)
6. Robert Wooley, Chancery Lane (Glazier)
7. John Watts, King's Street, Westminster (Feltmaker)
8. Thomas Roeden, lower end of Long Acre (Locksmith)
9. Nathaniel Carter, New Street near Shoe Lane (Swordcutler)

### **Sunday night's society meeting at Mr. Bradshaw's in Denmark Court**

1. Mr. Strut, at the Civet Cat in the Strand (Perfumer)

**Tuesday night's society meeting at Mr. Chamberlain's in Titch's Court, Noble Street,**

1. Joseph Mitchell, at The Charterhouse (Tailor)
2. John Bradford, Old Fish Street (Tailor)
3. John Gunnell, address illegible, no occupation specified (? apprentice)
4. Anthony Lee, Red Cross St. (Barber)
5. Edward Phillips, at The Bull, Bishopsgate (Porter)

**Wednesday night's society meeting at Mr. Watt's at the Five Bells**

1. Edward Banister, at Mr. Watt's, Dukes St. (Jeweller)
2. John Banbridge, no address given (Tailor)
3. Thomas Wood, The Horseshoe, Barbican (Brass turner)
4. James Hartley, Dolphin Court, Ludgate Hill (Tailor)
5. Richard Chad, at the Plow, St. Paul's Churchyard (Canechair-maker)
6. Richard Hacker, Dean's Court, Old Bailey (Porter)
7. John Wood, The Horseshoe, Barbican (Salesman)

**Thursday night's society meeting at Mr. Wood's in Fountain Court, the Strand**

1. Timothy Price, by Bedford House, the Strand (Engraver)
2. John Belbin, against Durham Yard (Perukemaker)
3. Christopher Harris, against Durham Yard (Confectioner)
4. Edmund Peusey, Drury Lane (Gunsmith)
5. Bodenham Rewse, at The Blueball the Strand (Embroiderer)

**Thursday night's society meeting at Mr. Thomas Castle's in Cannon Street, near Abchurch Lane**

1. John Downham, Staining Lane (Goldsmith)
2. Thomas Castle, Cannon Street (Pewterer)
3. John Skeat, the Warming Pan, Houndsditch (Brasier)
4. Phillip Baudry, near the Strawhats, Winford St. (Weaver)
5. Matthew Robinson, Blind Chapel Court, Fenchurch St. (Tailor)

6. John Stuart, upon London Bridge (Stationer)
7. Thomas Behn, attorney at Barnard's Inn, Holborn (Gentleman)
8. Robert Robarts, at the Golden Patten without Bishopsgate (Pattenmaker)

### **Thursday night's society meeting at the Eagle and Child in St. Martin's le Grand**

1. David Tough, no address (? apprentice)

This collated table identifies by name, address and occupation in most cases forty-seven of the seventy-two men named on the 1692 undertaking of the Wood Street informing society. Most seem to have been journeymen craftsmen with a sprinkling of masters amongst them. One can easily see why the reformers in their letter to the religious societies took such pains to refute the objection that informing against immoralities was bad for business. Surely this would not have been necessary if, as some have claimed, religious society members eagerly took up informing in order to advance themselves by "doing down" potential rivals.<sup>148</sup> Informers were generally socially superior to those they sought to convict for immorality and profanations of the Lord's Day and there is no evidence to support the view of commercial self-interest as a motive for these men joining the informing societies.

Only two men styling themselves 'gentlemen' appear in this table, one a clerk and a Mr. Thomas Behn, an attorney of Barnard's Inn. The social standing of Mr. Behn, at least, can be guessed at with the aid of parish returns from the 1695 Act of Parliament (6 & 7 William and Mary cap. 6) making levies on burials, marriages and deaths. Several attorneys are listed there as surtax payers, indicating a personal estate valued at over £600 or real estate returning at least £50 a year in rent. Several of the informers from the above table do appear in these taxation returns but, given their occupations, it is not surprising that all are listed as paying the standard assessments of 4s. per burial, marriage or birth.<sup>149</sup> The informers from the Anglican religious societies of young men, therefore, though somewhat fickle in their adherence to the informing work urged by the reformers of manners after the first skirmish with establishment enemies late in 1691, renewed their efforts a year later and became an indispensable part of the law enforcement machinery. These informers were solid citizens with a real stake in the survival of conventions of sobriety, honesty and reverence for religion and authority without which the society in which they functioned as tradesmen was endangered. Their participation in a campaign of law enforcement and aid to magistrates prosecuting immoral and profane persons sprang from a desire to protect the moral estate of the nation and, by implication, their own positions within in.

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<sup>148</sup> The 1975 conference paper by Dr. Speck (see above note 133) advanced this thesis.

<sup>149</sup> *London Inhabitants Within the Walls* (London Record Society II, 1966), passim.



The gentlemen directing the reformation of manners campaign in London also looked outside the Established Church to the Dissenters in their search for allies. Following the tribulations of the Hartley affair in late 1691, and possibly to 'plug the gap' left by the temporary departure of the young men of the religious societies from the task of informing, they approached leading dissenting ministers in London in a drive to find more informers. At the outset they stressed to the Dissenters that *'there are several justices (to whose number there is great prospect of a considerable addition) who have been always ready to do their duty by receiving informations and granting and signing summonses and warrants'*. The reformers then *'humbly offered to the consideration of the reverend nonconformist ministers whether it may not be a very great means to further the reformation already begun if they could prevail with any considerable number of the members of their congregations ... in making it some part of their business to take notice of the breaches of the laws and to give informations against offenders'*.

In their appeal to the Dissenters, the gentlemen reformers stressed their zeal to suppress profanations of the Lord's Day in particular in an effort to capitalise on sabbatarian sentiments in that audience. Most of the laws on this subject are now moribund or have been wiped from the statute book. Since an appreciation of the whole position of Sunday trading is central to an understanding of the reformers' efforts, what follows is the description of the Lord's Day profanations as elaborated for the dissenting ministers:<sup>150</sup>

*Profanation of the Lord's Day by doing any worldly labour (except works of necessity or charity) by any person of the age of 14 years is punishable by 29 Charles II, cap. 7, penalty 5s. for every offence.*

*Firstly: By crying, showing forth or putting to sale any wares, fruits, goods, etc. (except milk only) before the hours of 9 in the morning and after 4 in the afternoon is punishable by the same Act, penalty to forfeit such wares, fruits, goods, etc. to the use of the poor.*

*Secondly: By drovers, horsecarriers, wagoners, butchers, higlers, or any of their servants travelling or coming to their inn on the Lord's Day is punishable by 3 Charles II, cap. 1 and also by 29 Charles II, cap. 7, penalty 20s.*

*Thirdly: Profanation of the Lord's Day by travelling with any horse, boat or wherry, except where allowed by one justice of the peace so to do, is punishable by 29 Charles II, cap. 7, penalty 5s. for every offence.*

*Fourthly: By using unlawful exercise or pastime, is punishable by 1 Charles I, cap. 1 and 3 Charles I, cap. 4, penalty 3s. 4d. to the use of the poor, the offender to be questioned within a month and the offence to be proved by one witness.*

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<sup>150</sup> Bodl. Rawl. MS D. 129, fol. 7ff.; cf. EUL Laing MS III 394, pp. 421-45.

*Fifthly: Profanation of the Lord's Day by any butcher, or other acting for him, sitting or selling any victuals is punishable by 3 Charles II, cap. 1, penalty 6s. 8d., the offender to be questioned within six months and the offence proved by two witnesses.*

The dissenting ministers also heard from the gentlemen reformers of manners of the 'prudential methods' they recommended to all who undertook informing work. Of particular interest in this regard is the distinction made between swearing and cursing as two types of profane oaths. Swearing was to be informed against only 'where ... God, Lord, Jesus, or Christ are used plainly and lightly and in the sense of an affirmation or negation'. In informing against cursing, however, the informer had greater latitude since a curse was 'punishable as well without the aforesaid words as with them'. The standard penalty for convicted swearers and cursers was 1s. for each offence. This could be levied by distraint and sale of goods by the constable. Failing that the offender could be set in the stocks for three hours, provided he or she was more than twelve years old. Younger offenders could be whipped by the constable on the instructions of a magistrate, or by a parent or master in the constable's presence.<sup>151</sup>

There is no MS material equivalent to that for the involvement of the religious societies on which to judge the participation of Dissenters in the reformation movement. But contemporaries were well aware of the ecumenical nature of the law enforcement campaign and, indeed, this was a principal reason in Queen Anne's time for the hostility shown to the reformation of manners movement by High Church apologists such as Henry Sacheverell (see Chap 7).

Some light on the appeal of the reformation's objectives for those outside the Anglican Communion can be gained by a note on the involvement of a prominent figure in the London nonconformist community, Thomas Firmin. A wealthy textile merchant and friend of leading Anglican divines such as John Tillotson and Edward Fowler, Firmin was often accused of propagating his Socinian ideas along with his philanthropic schemes for the relief of debtors and destitute children, but his opposition to immoralities was undoubted. A firm supporter of William and Mary, Firmin was described by a contemporary biographer as '*not more a friend to the liberties of the nation, and to the present establishment, than he was an enemy to licentiousness.*'<sup>152</sup> The man combined his political loyalty to the Revolution Settlement with a fear that unchecked vice endangered its survival, a central

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., fol13. The penalties are fully described in the frequently reprinted tract *An Abstract of those Laws Commanded by the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty to be put in speedy Execution ... published for the Ease and Direction of the several and respective officers in their performance of their duty* cf. EUL Laing MS 111,394, pp. 306, *An Exact Copy of an Abstract published for the Ease and Instruction of Inferior Officers and Distributed among the Informers.*

<sup>152</sup> [Stephen Nye], *The Life of Mr. Thomas Firmin, late Citizen of London* (1698), p. 63ff; see also *The Charitable Samaritan, or a short and impartial Account of that most eminent and public spirited Citizen Thomas Firmin.* The three-volume study *Thomas Firmin, FRS 1632-1697* by H. W. Stephenson (unpublished Oxford D. Phil thesis, 1949), ignored this aspect of Firmin's activities.

identification in the ideology of the principal reformers of manners. He seems to have been taken into the circle of the gentlemen reformers at an early stage, and once among the 'directors' of the undertaking Firmin *'contributed to it by his advice, assistance and solicitations'* among friends in high places. Not the least important from the standpoint of the expenses of contemporary law enforcement was Firmin's great personal wealth, succinctly phrased by his biographer as *'his purse was always with them'*. Profane swearing was a particular target of Thomas Firmin's, and his activities against it in coffee houses and taverns among his associates were well known. He ostracised his friends who were incorrigible swearers and doubled or trebled the fine if the offender was a clergyman or a nobleman whose bad example in public was, to reformers' thinking, so damaging to the morals of lesser men. Those who balked at paying their fines were chided by Firmin with a reminder that *'the forfeiture was to the poor, whose collector and steward he was'*.<sup>153</sup> Firmin's wealth and influence made him much more than an eccentric 'one-man magistracy'. His adoption of the reformation of manners cause illustrates the juncture of belief already seen in the gentlemen founders of the First Society for Reformation of political loyalty to William and Mary, literal Christianity, and anxiety for the preservation for a social order in England whose main bulwark against erosion was the public enforcement of laws punishing immoralities and profanations.

The principal encouragement to the re-joining of the reformation undertaking by the young men of the religious societies and the recruitment of like-minded Dissenters into the fold of the informers was the about-turn in the attitude of the Middlesex Justices of the Peace following the regulation in the spring of 1692. It is therefore necessary to take notice of the new reforming JPs and their sympathetic colleagues already on the bench and the methods they used to encourage informers. The most complete copy of these methods includes the names of the Middlesex JPs agreeing to abide by them in dealing with informations. It is reproduced below as it appears in the Edinburgh University Laing MSS:<sup>154</sup>

***Methods Agreed on by the Justices of Middlesex for the Encouragement of Informers.***

- 1st. That we will readily receive the information of the informers without giving them delay or other discouragement.*
- 2. As to the profanation of the Lord's Day, by permitting tippling or the exercise of their ordinary calling because there may be a pretence of either charity or necessity for so doing, we will according to the Order of Sessions of January [1692] last give our summons to the informer to summons the offender before us. And upon hearing his defence, we will not call in the informer before the offender's face unless it shall be necessary: and that then we will not discover his name nor habitation unless that also be necessary.*

<sup>153</sup> [Nye], *Life of Firmin*, p. 64.

<sup>154</sup> EUL Laing MS 111,394, pp. 415-20; cf, Bodl. Rawlinson MS D. 129, fols. 3-5 (lacking names).

3. *In all summonses by any of us granted, we will appoint the time of appearance as shall be most to the convenience of the informer, a whole day being also to be allowed between the summoning.*

4. *That we will allow some part of every day when we are at home, some hour whereon we have most leisure, for receiving the informers whom we will acquaint therewith as occasion shall be, that the informer shall not loose [sic] his labour in coming when we are either not at home or not at leisure.*

5. *That we will heartily espouse the cause of these informers. And if at any time it appears to us that any of them shall be abused, calumniated, or otherwise exposed for having given just information, or threatened or otherwise deterred from giving such information, we will not only give them all loyal protection but we will prosecute with the utmost rigour of the laws all such offenders that their punishment may serve for an example and warning to others, this being what her Majesty in her pious letter [9 July 1691] has particularly required of us. And that therefore in order thereto, when at any time any such matter relating to this Reformation of Manners shall be tried before the justices of this country at their General Sessions, we will diligently give attendance to the same, that a cause to which we owe so much may never suffer by our neglect, of which matters, therefore, when they shall happen we will endeavour to give notice to each other and to such other justices as are friends to this our design.*

6. *And lastly, that for the better carrying on of this our design, we will meet together once every week ... to consult upon all such matters hereunto relating as shall offer to us in the execution of our office.*

*Richard Bulkeley  
Thomas Wren  
George Bohun  
John Perry  
William Withers*

*William Underhill  
Alexander Pittfield  
Thomas Railton  
Daniel Nicholls  
George Ford*

Sir Richard Bulkeley was sitting on the Middlesex bench by June 1692. The other JPs named in this document, therefore, must be existing sympathisers, though why they were unable to use their power to prevent the expulsion of Ralph Hartley late in 1691 remains a mystery. This document shows that the reformers had learned the lessons of that trying time, for it highlighted the pitfalls of convicting offenders unheard for Lord's Day offences who might have a mitigating plea--precisely the point the anti-reformation JPs made against Hartley in their Order of 12 December 1691. However, these later reforming JPs still balked at bringing informer and offender face-to-face unless absolutely necessary, no doubt to lessen the chances of reprisals later on, though this practice would continue to fuel charges that informers were malicious and self-interested in bringing prosecutions (see Chap 4).

With such proponents established on the Middlesex bench of justices, the reformation campaign was now in an ideal position to utilise to the full the newly reorganised network of informers drawn from both Churchmen and Dissenters.<sup>155</sup> Backed by the resources of men such as Thomas Firmin, the London reformers could undertake a comprehensive programme of law enforcement based on official pronouncements such as the Sessions Order of January 1692 which, when promulgated only a few months earlier by their judicial opponents, had seemed such a discouragement.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> From the mid-summer of 1692, Narcissus Luttrell's *Brief Relation* reports a tightening of control by the authorities in London and Westminster over coffee houses, unlawful games on fast days, and lotteries. The reforming justice John Perry is mentioned; see vol. II, pp. 506, 513, 519.

<sup>156</sup> The Sessions Order (MRO Sessions Book 493, fols 57-59) was described by the reformers at the time as '*against the informers and all matters of that nature ...*'. (EUL Laing MS III, 394, p. 209).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### TWO PRINCIPAL TARGETS FOR REFORMATION

The first section of this chapter examines the law enforcement campaign directed by the reformers of manners against bawdy houses and prostitutes following the death of Queen Mary in 1694. The surviving evidence of successful prosecutions will be considered and some trends highlighted. Reactions to this aspect of reformation work will be mentioned and the legal problems involved in bringing prosecutions of this type are also discussed. A similar treatment is given to efforts against Lord's Day offences in the second part of this first section. Swearing, cursing and drunkenness on Sundays are all considered from the standpoint of the legal problems of enforcing existing laws and the efforts of reformers to make that enforcement more effective.

#### Bawdy Houses and Prostitutes.

Queen Mary was frequently entrusted with real executive authority when William was abroad and this aided her support for better law enforcement in London. This interest in social control had political significance as well, since the dangers posed by a French invasion were only heightened by tendencies to disorder and debauchery in the population. Mary's fear that the affluent did not share her concern for reformed manners was articulated by one of her favourite preachers, Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, in April 1691. Burnet complained that *'by the prodigality and luxury, the gaming, the playhouses, and the other extravagant expenses that are still among us one would conclude that men are not much pinched, when there is so much left for vanity and pleasure'*.<sup>157</sup> This theme would be often repeated in reformation of manners propaganda.

Mary possessed no panacea for reforming manners, though she undoubtedly understood the link between moral standards, achievement of war objectives and national survival. Archbishop Tillotson shared the Queen's belief when he had preached before the Commons in spring 1690 that *'there is no such way to engage the providence of God for us, as by real repentance and reformation, and ... by the provision of wise and effectual laws for the discountenancing and suppressing of profaneness and vice, and by the careful and due execution of them ....'* Such a prescription for national moral health would *'retrieve the ancient piety and virtue'* of England, without which England could not long be on good terms with God, *'upon whose favour depends the prosperity and stability of the present and future time'*.<sup>158</sup>

With her advisers of this persuasion, reformers of manners were cheered to find from the summer of 1691 that Queen Mary was *'incessantly employed in possessing her mind with the best schemes, that are either laid before her by others or suggested by her own thought, for correcting everything which was amiss, and improving*

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<sup>157</sup> Elizabeth Hamilton, *William's Mary: A Biography of Mary II* (New York, 1972), p. 278

<sup>158</sup> John Tillotson (then Dean of St. Paul's), *Fast Sermon preached before the House of Commons on 16 April 1690*, pp. 32-33.

*everything that wanted finishing*'. One of these 'best schemes' was Bishop Edward Stillingfleet's promotion of the efforts of the reformers of manners, of which the Queen had '*just sentiments*' and '*thought it became her to give it countenance*'.<sup>159</sup>

England was grief stricken when both the Queen and Archbishop Tillotson died within a few weeks of each other in late 1694. Many sermons speculated on the national implications of the double loss. A common theme was divine judgment on an unrepentant people and dire warnings on what else might be in store if immorality and blasphemy remained unchecked. Some ecclesiastical commentators such as Gilbert Burnet saw a '*melancholy prospect*' for the future unless '*a general repentance, and a sincere reformation of manners*' could '*break through the clouds that seem now to be big, and even ready to burst*'.<sup>160</sup> The bishop did not hold out much hope for such an initiative. But the public-minded Christians in the societies for reformation of manners were not content to seek only, in Burnet's words, '*some lengthening out of our tranquillity, and a mitigation of our miseries ... though they are fixed upon us by irreversible decrees*'.<sup>161</sup> The reformers of manners wanted not just to stem the tide of immorality and profaneness, but to reverse it and establish once again a conformity to England's ancient piety and social order which would be the most effective bulwark against the visible enemy without and the opportunism, hypocrisy and disbelief which they saw threatening the nation from within. They had no illusions about England's fate at the hands of a vengeful God if they failed.

The untimely death of figures such as Queen Mary and Tillotson should not be over-rated in their effect on the impetus building up behind the reformation of manners movement in the capital. Important as she was for her 'lead from the top' in the early days, her approbation of reformation objectives was really symbolic, though it undoubtedly bestowed some degree of credibility and cause for optimism on the reformers themselves. The movement itself was not greatly affected by her death. As one of its founders, the barrister William Yates, explained, the loss of Mary

*'though it appeared exceedingly great, did not discourage those that were engaged in this enterprise. For as they at first set about it with little or no expectation of such a patroness, because they thought it would be an acceptable service to the King of Kings, and that it would promote the true interests of religion, and the welfare of their country; so the same considerations obliged them to pursue their design with equal vigour and zeal, though they were deprived of a great friend and protector.'*<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> William Yates, *An Account of the Societies for Reformation of Manners in England and Ireland* (5th ed. 1701), p. 6.

<sup>160</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *Memorial to Mary, Princess of Orange* (1695 reprinted Edinburgh, 1842), p. 51. See also Edward Fowler, *Memoirs of the Life and Death of Queen Mary* (2nd ed., 1712), pp. 12-17 and Thomas Beverley, *A Solemn Persuasive to most earnest Prayers for the Revival of the Work of God* (1695), p. 14

<sup>161</sup> Burnet, *Memorial*, p. 85.

<sup>162</sup> Yates, *Account of the Societies*, pp. 6-7

Yates's message is clear. Mary was an unexpected bonus to the reformers of manners. Their strength however did not depend on personalities--the anonymity cherished by the gentlemen of the First Society for Reformation proves that--because their mission was aimed at the service of God and the English nation. William Yates continued his commentary with the claim that about the time of Mary's death, increasing numbers of respectable people throughout England were coming to acknowledge the valuable work being pursued by the reformers of manners in the capital.<sup>163</sup>

What proof was Yates's '*virtuous and unprejudiced part of the nation*' being offered? To find out, the official record of the movement's activities must be examined. The first statement for public consumption appeared from the presses of John Dunton in February 1694. This *Black Roll* formed an appendix to the pamphlet *Proposals for a National Reformation of Manners* containing theoretical arguments for reformation as well as 'case histories' of murder and debauchery in the Tower end of the City. Compiled from the prosecution records kept by the reforming societies themselves, this *Black Roll* listed the names and aliases of those punished during the preceding twelve months. The document appeared '*for the satisfaction of many who have been desirous to know what progress we have made in this reformation of manners*'.<sup>164</sup> Clearly there was now an audience desiring to know what the reformers were achieving, among whom must have been those men whose financial contributions kept the engine of law enforcement fuelled.

The *Black Roll* listed only those convicted and punished for the offences of keeping a bawdy house, cursing, being a night walker, or being a 'plyer' in a bawdy house. Night walking or plying for customers in or near bawdy houses was as much a target as actual sexual immorality. In 1689 Lord Mayor Thomas Pilkington described this aspect of prostitution as a '*most dissolute and infamous practice*' of fairly recent development in which both '*men and women in the evening ... wander about the streets and impudently solicit others to wickedness*'.<sup>165</sup> Of the offences related in the *Black Roll*, only cursing was not directly related to prostitution per se and the document can thus stand as a public statement of reformation endeavours against this aspect of corrupt manners. The specific group of reformers of manners responsible for the publication of the *Black Roll*, or at least the achievement of the record of successful prosecutions it embodied, was the fifty or so '*tradesmen and others, who have more especially applied themselves to the suppressing of lewdness by bringing the offenders to legal punishment*'.<sup>166</sup> These reformers were ordinary citizens who set the suppression of the activities of prostitutes and those sheltering and encouraging them at the head of their other reforming activities. In this they enjoyed the support of some reformation-minded parish officers who offered

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> *Proposals for a National Reformation of Manners* (1694), pp. 34-35.

<sup>165</sup> Guildhall Broadside 6.32 (19 November 1689).

<sup>166</sup> Yates, *Account of the Societies*, pp. 9-10.



advice about the best means to uncover such houses and prosecute their denizens.<sup>167</sup>

The *Black Roll* listed over three hundred persons who were punished by fines or by whipping in Bridewell. Very few men's names appeared in the list, and then usually as the partner of a woman punished for keeping a bawdy house herself. Out of a total of 313 prosecutions and convictions in this document, women punished specifically for night-walking or plying their trade in or near bawdy houses accounted for more than 250 successful actions taken by the reformers.

What was the impact of such a public declaration of law enforcement success? One result may have been the effort made by the City authorities to tighten their control over the activities of parish officers. In December 1694 Lord Mayor Thomas Lane issued a series of orders against profaneness and debauchery because he found *'many grievous vices and enormities are still publicly committed and go unpunished'*. Constables and churchwardens were therefore directed to enforce the laws with more vigour in order *'to procure a thorough reformation of manners in all places'*.<sup>168</sup> It is not difficult to detect the Mayor's exasperation at the inefficiency of the parish officers and the general unwillingness of the public to give private informations to magistrates where profane or immoral acts were concerned. This was precisely the problem the reformers tackled through their efforts at making the existing system function more efficiently by furnishing informations and bringing prosecutions.

Mayor Lane's order confirmed that he would like such practices established in the everyday working of the law as well. Constables and other officers were ordered not to shrink from the duties imposed by their oaths of office, and on no account to connive at law-breaking whether from fear of reprisal or the expectation of bribes. All citizens were further exhorted to cooperate with the magistrates by giving information of offences they witnessed, with the Mayor's assurance *'that none shall be suffered to molest or disturb them in their giving legal information'*.<sup>169</sup> This confirms that such intimidation of real or potential informers was a persistent impediment to more effective law enforcement to which neither the City authorities nor the reformers of manners had as yet found a remedy.

Mayor Lane's order contained measures meant to correct the remissness of inferior officers. Beginning in late 1694, all ward officers were directed to furnish their Aldermen with monthly reports of offenders discovered, charged, prosecuted and convicted, together with a record of the fines or other penalties imposed. As an encouragement, the Mayor promised that if anyone *'resisted, vexed, or molested [them] in the execution of their offices'*, they would be *'vindicated by the authority of the Court of the Lord Mayor and Aldermen and the offenders prosecuted and*

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Guildhall Broadside 17.115

<sup>169</sup> Ibid

*punished*'.<sup>170</sup> What is significant in the light of the earlier statement from the reformers of manners is that the Mayor's instructions virtually duplicated the manner in which the agents of the reforming societies were already keeping records of prosecutions they initiated so that checks could be made at the Quarter or Petty Sessions on the performance of the parochial officers.<sup>171</sup> Though it cannot be proved that Sir Thomas Lane was among the gentlemen guiding the reformation's course in the capital, he seems thoroughly familiar with their tactics and appears in this 1694 order to implement them among the official agents for law enforcement at parish level. What success this attempt had will be noted later in this chapter.

The *Black Roll* did not appear in 1695 and instead its place was taken by a more comprehensive document called *The Black List* describing prosecutions for the period from Christmas 1694 to Christmas 1695. The contents of this remain unknown, however, since the first extant *Black List* is the *Sixth* covering the period Christmas 1699 to Christmas 1700. By this date the *Black Lists* were standardised presentations aimed at acquainting the public with both the specific achievements for the year as well as the cumulative law enforcement efforts of the reformation societies in London. Thus the *Sixth Black List* proudly stated that the five lists preceding it contained the names of 3859 persons prosecuted and punished for various offences, an average of 792 each year between 1695 and 1700.<sup>172</sup> In none of the five surviving *Black Lists* was there a major departure from the prostitution-related categories first established by *The Black Roll* of February 1694. With the single addition of those punished as pickpockets (a small number which dwindled to 'nil' in later lists) these extant *Black Lists* named only persons '*legally prosecuted and convicted*' of prostitution-related offences '*who have thereupon been sentenced by the magistrates as the law directs, and have accordingly been punished (many of them divers times) either by carting, whipping, fines, imprisonment, or suppressing their licences*'.<sup>173</sup> The *Sixth Black List* specifically stated that the '*many notorious curses, swearers, Sabbath breakers, and drunkards*' punished by other reformers of manners were '*not included*', thus confirming the *Black Lists* as the direct heirs of the 1694 *Black Roll* and its single-minded authors.<sup>174</sup>

Why was there such stress in the movement's public statements on the suppression of prostitutes and their associates? One reason already mentioned was to show the movement's financial backers how monies were spent in obtaining convictions and the punishment of wrongdoers. But a more significant explanation of the emphasis on prostitution and related offences stems from the reformers' efforts to remove the scandal of sexual immorality from a nation professing itself Christian. On a practical

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 49-58 describes the reformers' records.

<sup>172</sup> A '*Sixth Black List of Eight Hundred and Forty three Lewd and Scandalous Persons, who by the Endeavours of a Society for Promoting a Reformation of Manners in the City London and Suburbs thereof, have been legally Prosecuted and Convicted etc* (1701).

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

level, there was the physical health of the nation to be considered as well. Married men could taint their families, while servants or apprentices frequenting whores might be tempted to defraud masters or parents to finance their pleasures. Such deceits would lead to a life of greater sins, the reformers argued, and possibly the gallows. Instead of a strong and moral nation, toleration of prostitution would lead, as Josiah Woodward declared, to a situation '*whereby many a young man (that might have done good service to his country in many ways) is utterly emasculated, and becomes feeble as old age and trembles like a poor enervated paralytic [sic]*'.<sup>175</sup>

Some reformers did spare a thought for the rehabilitation of prostitutes as well as their corporal punishment in Bridewell, where the corruptions of prison life tended to harden offenders rather than encourage their reformation. The Reverend Thomas Bray even drew up a 'General Plan for a Penitential Hospital for the Employing of Lewd Women' as one remedy to the problem, but prison reform as a companion to law enforcement was an infrequent, and then always subsidiary, argument in reformation of manners propaganda.<sup>176</sup>

To most supporters of the reformation movement the primary objective was to dissuade vicious persons from committing further immoralities either through punishment, fear, or shame and to drive the women who tempted men into 'uncleanness' from the streets and bawdy houses of the metropolis.<sup>177</sup> This would bring immediate benefits to society in terms of general health and harmony. On a higher level, such a visible improvement would remove scandal and thus please God while at the same time increasing England's stocks of national virtue and rescuing the souls of wayward Englishmen and possibly a few lewd Englishwomen from damnation. As the reformer Robert Nelson summed up this providential interpretation of human behaviour, '*societies of men... will be punished or rewarded with temporal judgments or blessings accordingly as they promote or discourage the punishment of vice, and the encouragement of virtue*'.<sup>178</sup>

There were certain procedures to be followed by constables and other informers if effective prosecutions of prostitutes and bawdy house keepers were to be achieved. Prostitution was a distinct offence in law, and therefore 'matter of fact' had to be proved against women suspected of it. This was absolutely necessary where a suspected prostitute had some visible means of support or was married or reputed to have a husband, though in the case of soldiers or sailors, he might be absent. Women lacking such visible means of support and also unmarried women were another matter. Constables could take them up and commit them to Bridewell as

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<sup>175</sup> Woodward, *Religious Societies*, p. viii.

<sup>176</sup> Bray MSS, fols. 65-66 and 107-108.

<sup>177</sup> 'Uncleanness' encompassed whore-mongering and adultery as well as direct contact with prostitutes. Josiah Woodward condemned it as '*highly offensive to Almighty God... and a means of drawing down his judgments on nations, cities, and private families*' in *A Dissuasive from the Sin of Uncleanness* (1701, frequently reprinted). See also J.F. Osterwald, *The Nature of Uncleanness Considered* (1708) and *A Check to Debauchery and other Crying Sins of these Times* (1692)

<sup>178</sup> Robert Nelson, *An Address to Persons of Quality and Estate* (1715), p. 150.

vagrants or disorderly persons. Thus laws prohibiting vagrancy and disorderliness, a vague offence with much discretion allowed to the arresting officer, could be and were used against prostitutes without the reformers having to prove 'matter of fact'.

The most direct means of detecting prostitutes and their associates was to search houses suspected of harbouring them. If law officers found men and women together in private rooms in such houses, this was sufficient for the constable to take them before a magistrate where they could be required to post sureties for future good behaviour. Keepers of such houses could similarly be bound over by the magistrates. Even if there was no hard evidence that a bawdy house was being kept, owners could still be indicted at Quarter Sessions as keepers of disorderly houses and denizens as disorderly persons. In other words, lesser charges than outright whoring and keeping a bawdy house were quite sufficient where 'matter of fact' was difficult or impossible to prove.<sup>179</sup> The capital's '*music houses*' where drink and entertainment were both available were seen by the reformers as '*notorious nurseries of lewdness and debauchery*' and prosecuted as disorderly houses while some of their patrons were harried as disorderly persons.<sup>180</sup>

This procedure for detecting prostitutes had its drawbacks from the standpoint of constables and informers. Constables were particularly open to charges of extortion and deceit in obtaining informations and convictions and opportunities for blackmailing both whores and their clients were frequent. Critics of the reformation movement's activities were not slow to level such charges. It was a typical jibe that reformers who were also constables perverted religious zeal and were in reality '*rascally fellows that cloak their villainies with religion and bubble the public under pretence of being religious informers*'.<sup>181</sup> Another frequent criticism was that reforming constables first debauched the very women they later arrested and committed to Bridewell.<sup>182</sup> In the constables' defence, reformation leaders protested that no genuine informer or reformation-minded law officer was ever involved in such practices.<sup>183</sup> But just as the reformers were never able to shed the odium of being meddlers in private affairs, so too they were always haunted by the whiff of scandal concerning false prosecutions and extortion where prostitution-related offences were concerned.

*Black Lists* survive for December-to-December periods of the following years: 1699-1700; 1700-1701; 1701-1702; 1703-1704; and 1706-1707. In 1708-1709 a change in presentation occurred and instead of a 'Fourteenth Black List' the reformers issued *The Fourteenth Account of the Progress made in the Cities of London and*

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<sup>179</sup> SPCK Papers of Moment, p. 97 gives a view of the methods used by the reformers of manners before 1725 to suppress prostitution.

<sup>180</sup> Woodward, *Religious Societies*, p. 79

<sup>181</sup> *The Invisible Observer ... with the Character of a Religious Informer* (1705)

<sup>182</sup> *Observer* No. 94 (13-16 March 1703); *The Dutch Prophet* (26 November 1700); *A Second Part of the Hymn to Peace: or, The Ludgate-Hill Ramble being a New Step to the Reformation of Manners* (?1705)

<sup>183</sup> Yates, *Account of the Societies*, pp. 10-11.

*Westminster, and Places adjacent, by the Societies for Promoting Reformation of Manners; by Furthering the Execution of the Laws against Profaneness and Immorality, and other Christian Methods* (1709). The series of annual *Accounts* beginning with the Fourteenth marked a break both as to content and intent with the earlier public statements of the reforming societies.

In order to show this it is first necessary to consider the earlier *Black Lists* in aggregate. This is done by counting individual names and convictions and arranging the totals by type of offence with the inclusion of any indicated recidivism. The following table contains such an analysis:

**BLACK LISTS**  
**December to December**

Type of offence	6th 1699-1700	7th 1700-1701	8 <sup>th</sup> 1701-1702	10 <sup>th</sup> 1703-1704	13 <sup>th</sup> 1706-1707
Keeping a bawdy house	30	17	8	Nil	Nil
Whore	791	820	805	890	651
Keeping a disorderly house	47	41	77	15	57
Disorderly person	343	363	290	298	203
Pickpockets	29	18	6	Nil	Nil
<b>TOTAL NAMES</b>	843	944	858	863	706
<b>TOTAL CONVICTIONS including recidivism</b>	1240	1259	1186	1203	911

The vagaries in typography found in these broadside *Black Lists* mean that error in compiling these figures is inevitable and no statistically reliable conclusions can be made from them. Nevertheless some trends are discernible. The most obvious one is the decline in prosecutions for keeping a bawdy house, while prosecutions for whoring tended to increase. Does this mean there were fewer bawdy houses because more whores were being convicted and punished? Certainly reformation propaganda advanced this as an explanation for the decline in bawdy house conviction figures. As early as 1701 the reforming societies claimed that '*the deluge of public wickedness*' stemming from these houses was '*visibly abated*'. Hundreds of such places '*which were little better than stews, and nests for thieves, clippers and coiners have been rooted out and suppressed*' the claim continued. The Tower Hamlets district was said to be '*much purged of that pestilent generation of night-walkers, that used to infest [it]*'.<sup>184</sup> Forty to fifty women per week were said to be punished in Bridewell due to the efforts of the reformers, and some had chosen '*to be transported to our plantations, to work there for an honest subsistence, than to expose themselves, by their lewd way of living, to shame and punishment to poverty*

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid., pp 17-18.

*and diseases, to all sorts of wicked practices, and to the danger of the gallows, to which in the conclusion, they are often, if not generally, brought'.<sup>185</sup>*

By the reformers own published figures, the number punished for whoring or being a disorderly person (presumably mostly women) was closer to twenty per week on average in 1701 and not the forty to fifty in the propaganda claim. But as they frequently argued, more could be achieved against bawdy houses and prostitutes if only more money were forthcoming from well-disposed persons.<sup>186</sup> One of the reformers' chief apologists, the Rev. Josiah Woodward, affirmed that '*the process of our law is not a little chargeable,[and] it must be allowed, that money is the sinews of this war, as well as others*'.<sup>187</sup>

Woodward and other apologists were adamant that the evidence of the *Black Lists* testified to a real advantage gained by the reformers over sexual licence in the capital. But in contrast to their ebullience must be set other evidence--no doubt equally biased--disputing the effectiveness of the campaign against sexual immoralities. The reformers admitted that some of those arrested as whores and bawdy house keepers were punished several times and the *Black Lists* show quite high incidences of recidivism for certain individuals. On the *Tenth Black List* for 1703-1704 one Jane Ramsey is listed as being punished eleven times for whoring, and her name appeared again several times for the same offence on the *Thirteenth Black List* for 1706-1707. One Hannah Stedman was punished as a whore eight times during 1701-1702, and by 1703-1704 her total of convictions and punishments had risen to twelve. If one assumes that these are real women--and not common aliases like 'Mary Smith' whose omnipresence in the *Black Lists* made her the most durable whore in the metropolis--then the terrors of Bridewell do not seem to have succeeded in their objective of repression.

The names of women convicted for whoring are distinguished only by their commonness, suggesting a correspondingly low socio-economic status. No woman in the lists appears to have been among the mistresses patronised by the elite of the capital. Indeed, the reformers never claimed that their efforts against prostitution touched such ladies of pleasure or their clients. As the satirist Edward Ward described the situation,

*... Grandeur puts a Blind  
On Great Folks' Vices, yet I find  
Rich Harlots, who are so devout,  
That ride in Coach and Six about,  
Are lewd as those that walk on Foot;  
Only this Difference we may make,*

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., pp 18-19.

<sup>186</sup> Nelson, *Address to Persons of Quality*, pp. 151-153; *A Letter from a Residing Member of the Society (at London) for Promoting Christian Knowledge, to a Corresponding Member in the Country* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1725), pp. 7-8.

<sup>187</sup> Woodward, *Religious Societies*, p. 76.

*That rich Whores give, the poor ones take.*<sup>188</sup> 32

Daniel Defoe echoed this in his doggerel allegation that,

*The mercenary Scouts in every Street  
Bring all that have no Money to your Feet,  
And if you lash a Strumpet of the Town,  
She only smarts for want of Half a Crown:  
Your Annual lists of criminals appear,  
But no Sir Harry or Sir Charles is here.*<sup>189</sup>

In fairness to the reformers, they concentrated on public vices since they realised that law enforcement efforts could not reach the indiscretions of the affluent practised behind closed doors. They bemoaned the harm such bad examples caused among ordinary people, but chose the objectives of a visible improvement in manners as the most satisfying to God and beneficial to the nation. As the clerical magistrate John Disney wrote, '*vice when it is private and retired is not attended with those provoking circumstances as when it revels in your streets and in your markets and bids defiance to God and Religion in the face of open day*'.<sup>190</sup> If this were hypocrisy, Disney reasoned, then at least from a practical standpoint it was better than open scandal and less likely to call down divine wrath in the form of a French invasion.

One explanation for recidivism in the *Black Lists* could be the activities of constables who harried whores as sources of profit. Such cozening officers were discovered in the City Ward of Cripplegate-without in 1706 and bound over by the magistrates for extorting money from nightwalkers and failing to account for the fines.<sup>191</sup> It is easy to see why many took a dim view of law officers who associated themselves with the movement for reformation of manners. The parish constabulary was noted for inefficiency and peculation was not unknown among the inferior officers. For some officers the temptations to extort money in return for not reporting prostitutes or bawdy house keepers to the genuine reformers of manners must have proved strong. Certainly there was support for Edward Ward's belief that reformation activities only succeeded in making the lot of the poor whore more miserable. A 'reforming constable', said Ward

*searches a bawdy house, as a churchwarden does an ale-house,  
not to punish vice, but to get money. He squeezes whores as a  
thief-taker does highway-men, takes from them the fruits of  
their iniquities; making them twice as wicked as they would  
be by putting them upon fresh villainies to keep themselves  
from starving. He brings no woman to punishment for her*

<sup>188</sup> *Hudibras Redivivus* (2nd ed., 1708), I, p. 21.

<sup>189</sup> *Reformation of Manners, A Satyr* (1702), p. 63.

<sup>190</sup> *A Second Essay upon the Execution of the Laws against Immorality and Profaneness* (1710), p. 48.

<sup>191</sup> Bodl. Rawlinson MS D. 862, fol. 70

*ill-courses but for want of money, and she (if poor) that whores for pleasure more than profit, is sure oftenest to be whipped for it.*<sup>192</sup>

There was no doubt some truth in Ward's charge that *'she that has prudence to whore with half a crown in her pocket, may sin on without danger, whilst the poor needy wag-tail must be cautious how she kisses at ill hours, in ill houses, or in ill company, lest she be carried to Bridewell.'*<sup>193</sup> Even Abel Boyer's generous praise of the social objectives of the reformers of manners was blighted by his admission that their goals were *'in a great measure rendered useless by the scandalous and unwarrantable practices of those beggarly informers which [they] are obliged to employ, for the detecting of vicious persons'*.<sup>194</sup>

Whatever the real motives of the many constables and private citizens who made it their business to detect offenders and then give informations to the magistrates, it is not difficult to find contemporary opinions questioning the amount of reformation really achieved against prostitution. Speaking of the situation before 1719, the French traveller Henri Misson de Valbourg noted that whores had long since spread outwards from their former haunts around Lincoln's Inn Fields and *'now these ladies are distributed all the town over'*.<sup>195</sup> The author of *A View of London and Westminster* claimed that the Drury Lane area alone sheltered more than one hundred bawdy houses *'the ladies whereof ply their passengers at noon day, as publicly as the solicitors do their clients at Westminster'*. The societies for reformation of manners, he added, *'have taken more pains and expended as large sums to reclaim this new Sodom, as would have fitted out a force sufficient to have conquered the Spanish West Indies'* but with negligible results.<sup>196</sup>

The reformation-minded Chairman of the Middlesex Quarter Sessions, Whitelocke Bulstrode, praised the work of constables and other pious-minded men in discovering some of these *'naughty houses'* around Drury Lane, but admitted the situation was still grave and not helped by the proximity of the Playhouse where lewd notions were instilled into vulnerable young gentlemen.<sup>197</sup> The final contemporary word on the success of the reformation of manners campaign against prostitution and related offences probably belongs to Bernard Mandeville, the arch-satirist of all notions cherished by the reformers. His *Modest Defence of Public Stews* told the reformers that their *'endeavours to suppress lewdness, have only served to promote*

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<sup>192</sup> *The London Spy* (4th ed., 1709), pt. xv, pp. 362-367.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 366

<sup>194</sup> *History of the Reign of William III* (1702), III, p. 324; See also Roger Coke, *A Detection of the Court and State of England* (4th ed., 1719), III, p. 66.

<sup>195</sup> *Monsieur Misson's Memoirs and Observations in his Travels Over England* (La Haye [Den Haag], 1698; trans. English by J. Ozell, 1719), p. 60

<sup>196</sup> *A View of London and Westminster: Or, The Town Spy* (2nd ed.), pp. 13-14.

<sup>197</sup> *The Charge of Whitelocke Bulstrode to the Grand Jury and other Juries of the County of Middlesex on 21 April 1718 at Westminster Hall* (1718), p. 36



*it; and this branch of immorality has grown under your hands, as if it was pruned instead of being lopped'.<sup>198</sup>*

Harrying prostitutes and their associates often brought the reformers and their allies into close contact with the dregs of London. Much of this part of their work would have taken them into areas dangerous after dark where life was poor, nasty, brutish and short for the majority of inhabitants. The remarkable fact is that such potentially dangerous work produced so few martyrs who gave their lives in the course of enforcing the laws against immorality and profaneness. An examination of the circumstances surrounding one such martyrdom--the murder of reforming Constable John Dent in mid-March 1709--reveals more of the climate of legal opinion surrounding this aspect of reformation work.

The Anglican divine Thomas Bray described Constable Dent as a pious man who '*almost from the first engaged himself in the work of reformation of manners*' and he seems to have been interested in the movement for reformation for at least fifteen years.<sup>199</sup> Though of lowly origins, Constable Dent was well known to the reforming magistrates of London and apparently had a reputation for honesty as well as reforming zeal, in contrast to the 'reforming constables' decried by Edward Ward and other writers.

John Dent died as a result of his involvement in the arrest of a woman soliciting in Covent Garden.<sup>200</sup> On Friday 18 March 1709 Constable John Bray was impressing men for the Royal Navy and asked Dent's assistance for this task during the evening. Walking between the Playhouse and the Rose Tavern in Covent Garden, Bray encountered Ann Dickens, a prostitute well known to the district's law officers. Since she had been convicted several times already, Bray arrested her on suspicion of being a disorderly person and started to take her to the Round House to be charged before a magistrate. It was now about 8 p.m. and passing through Covent Garden the constable, with Ann Dickens in tow, encountered a group of soldiers rather the worse for drink. Heated words flew and the soldiers drew their swords. Constable Bray showed his staff of office and sent a fellow officer, Philip Chomley, to the nearest watch house with Ann Dickens to bring help.

When Constable Chomley returned in the company of Constable John Dent, the loitering soldiers again became unruly and one attacked and mortally wounded Dent. In court a guardsman named Jeremy Tooley and two other private soldiers were

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<sup>198</sup> *A Modest Defence of Public Stews* (1724), p. ii. The author of *Pretty Doings in a Protestant Nation: Being a View of the Present state of Fornication, Whorecraft, and Adultery in Great Britain* (1734) did not even mention the reformers of manners. For the titillation aspect of reformation propaganda against prostitutes see John Dunton's *Night Walker, or Evening Rambles in Search after Lewd Women with the Conferences held with Them* (8 pts., 1696-97).

<sup>199</sup> *The Good Fight of Faith, in the Cause of God against the Kingdom of Satan* (1709), p.15; Yates, *Account of the Societies* pp. 9-10 describes constables working for the reformation movement and Bodl. Rawlinson MS D. 1401 shows Dent acting as an informer between 1704 and 1707.

<sup>200</sup> The story is given in *The Tryals of Jeremy Tooley, William Arch and John Clauson... for the murder of John Dent* (1732), passim

charged with Constable Dent's murder. They had been arrested within hours of the incident and committed to prison by Justice Thomas Railton, a long standing friend of the reformers of manners from the earliest days of the 1690s. Their trial was in the hands of the Chief Justice of Queen's Bench, Sir John Holt, and this judge turned the proceedings into a platform from which to berate the activities of men such as John Dent and his associates. Holt was no friend of voluntary organisations such as reforming societies who attempted to quicken the pace of the official machinery of law enforcement.<sup>201</sup> This antipathy pervaded his conduct at the trial of Dent's murderers.

During his testimony, Constable Bray admitted that he was acting outside his own constablewick when he arrested Ann Dickins, but added that this was a common practice when apprehending disorderly persons. The Crown's prosecuting counsel maintained this was quite normal in the Liberty of Westminster, but Chief Justice Holt intervened at this early stage to say that it was not the matter of fact of Dent's mortal wounding that concerned him, but rather the incident of the arrest of Ann Dickins which precipitated the attack on Constable Dent. *'That which seems to me considerable'*, he interjected, *'is this: why does this man meddle with this woman, when she was walking about civilly? What! Must not a woman, though she be lewd, have the liberty to walk quietly about the streets?'* Taken aback, the Crown's counsel insisted that Ann Dickins was not innocently walking but openly soliciting for clients. This too failed to impress Chief Justice Holt who replied *'What! Must not a woman of the town walk in the town streets? These [reforming constables] think they do things so meritorious in taking up light women; why, a light woman hath a right to liberty as well as another to walk about the streets.'*<sup>202</sup>

The judge's contention that the constables had brought the whole misfortune on their own heads by wrongfully arresting Ann Dickins was strengthened by the testimony of one of the soldiers that they thought the woman was in danger and did not know that Bray, Chomley and Dent were law officers. It was further alleged that some Crown witnesses were paid informers who sold their services to constables such as Dent.

All of this caused Chief Justice Holt to instruct the jury that though Ann Dickins *'was a lewd woman, and might deserve correction at the time she was taken, there was no occasion for the constable to take her now... They do not prove that she was doing any unlawful action... The constable had no authority to take this woman and ought to have left her alone... This woman being imprisoned unlawfully at that time, it was a provocation to have a woman imprisoned without any cause at all. I do not think [Constable Bray] was wise or just in doing thus, the woman having done no*

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<sup>201</sup> Sir Richard Onslow, Speaker of the House of Commons, shared Holt's antipathy to *'voluntary combinations for putting laws in execution, which often ran into violences [sic] and personal revenges [sic], and other irregularities: some persons too severely prosecuted, while others were connived at'* according to Gilbert Burnet, *History of my own Time* (Oxford, 1823), V, p. 18, note m.

<sup>202</sup> *Tryals of Jeremy Tooley*, pp. 18-19.

*lewd act.*<sup>203</sup> Sir John Holt directed the jury to '*find the matter special, because the woman was unlawfully taken up*'.<sup>204</sup>

Such badgering of juries from the bench to ensure a pre-determined verdict was a well-established custom during the later seventeenth century, and tirades from judges were still common practice into the next century.<sup>205</sup> In taking this hostile stand against the efforts of the reformers of manners, Holt was repeating the course of a famous Restoration case also involving attempts at 'reformation'. In 1668 Chief Justice Sir John Keeling rebuked a group of London apprentices for pulling down bawdy houses in Moorfields. The bench saw this as nothing short of treason against the King's Peace. Such extra-legal activity was '*mad reformation*' because it proceeded without direction from above and this made '*the way... worse than the thing*'.<sup>206</sup> Forty years later, Sir John Holt's condemnation of the reforming constables was squarely within this tradition. Any spark of extra effort such as zeal to promote reformation of manners which led officers to anticipate wrongdoing as they had in the case of Ann Dickins was still beyond the judicial pale.

Despite the outcome of the trial, the reformers of manners gave John Dent a hero's funeral and made the event into a show of support for the reformation movement. According to the Rev. Thomas Bray, thirty constables and beadles together with twenty to thirty clergymen preceded Dent's coffin. Twelve justices of the peace carried the pall and others followed behind with many Aldermen from the City and gentlemen of quality. Behind these worthies walked over one thousand mourners from all ranks.<sup>207</sup>

John Dent's murder and the antics of Sir John Holt at the trial of his killers roughly coincided with a fundamental alteration in the manner in which the reformers of manners in London reported their activities to the public. Beginning in 1709, the first of a new series of printed reports appeared entitled the *Fourteenth Account of the Progress made in Suppressing Profaneness and Debauchery in London and Westminster*. These smaller single sheets replaced the series of broadside *Black Lists* and described an altered range of offences. Whereas the latter supplied names or aliases of those prosecuted and actually convicted and punished through the efforts of the reformers, the *Accounts* gave no names and recorded totals only for those '*prosecuted and proceeded against*'. It is not clear if such persons were actually convicted and punished as well, and this makes direct comparisons between *Accounts* and *Black Lists* difficult. What is clear from the following table analysing the extant *Accounts* is that their overall totals are greater than those occurring on the

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid., pp 27-30.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., p.30.

<sup>205</sup> J. P. Kenyon, *The Stuart Constitution* (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 420-424. See also the discussion in Douglas Hay, 'Property, Authority and the Criminal Law' in Hay, Linebaugh, and Thompson eds., *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England*. (1975).

<sup>206</sup> *The Tryals of Peter Messenger [and fourteen other apprentices] for High Treason* (1668, reprinted 1710 in the wake of the Dent trial) p. 9.

<sup>207</sup> *The Good Fight of Faith*, (1709) unpaginated introduction.

*Black Lists*. Does this indicate increased effectiveness? Or are the *Accounts* less refined than the *Black Lists* and inflated with numbers of persons who were prosecuted but not actually convicted and punished? Without a detailed crosscheck between reformers' statements and court records it is impossible to decide this question. Certainly from a propaganda standpoint, the reformation movement must have appeared healthier in the annual *Accounts* than in the dwindling figures contained in the *Black Lists*. Given the concern for public image expressed by the movement's apologists, and the climate of hostility to the campaign against prostitution expressed in the Dent trial, this is a reasonable explanation for the change.

*Accounts* survive for the years 1707-1708 and 1708-1709. Thereafter there is a gap until 1714-1715. To give continuity to the analysis, *Accounts* for years after 1715 have been included up to 1717-1718. As can be seen, this tends to confirm trends already apparent before 1715:

#### **Accounts: December - to - December Periods**

TYPE OF OFFENCE	14 <sup>th</sup> 1707-08	15 <sup>th</sup> 1708-09	21 <sup>st</sup> 1714-15	22 <sup>nd</sup> 1715-16	23 <sup>rd</sup> 1716-17	24 <sup>th</sup> 1717-18
Lewd and disorderly practices	1255	794	1152	1066	1927	1253
Keeping a bawdy or disorderly house	51	32	36	9	33	31
Keeping a gaming house	30	10	8	8	Nil	8
Exercising trade on the Lord's Day	1187	1523	1066	621	524	429
Swearing and Cursing	626	575	263	102	400	205
Drunkenness	150	42	46	14	25	17
<b>TOTAL PROSECUTIONS</b>	3299	2976	2571	1820	2909	1943

The first thing to strike one about the categories in the *Accounts* is the disappearance of the separate listings for whoring and bawdy house-keeping and their subsumption in the new categories '*lewd and disorderly practices*' and '*keeping a bawdy or disorderly house*'. This change reflects the difficulties in proving 'matter of fact' against whores and bawdy-house keepers referred to earlier and the increasing use of charges of 'disorderliness' against those suspected of practising or abetting prostitution. It was not the reformers' successes so much as their problems where prostitution was concerned which led to this change in public reporting, which was all the more desirable since the inflated figures shown under the amended categories now included prosecutions only and thus conveyed a better impression of the movement's effectiveness.

A second innovation in these *Accounts* was the inclusion every year of a defence of the use of informers to obtain prosecutions. This is indirect confirmation of Abel

Boyer's remark mentioned above that the taint of corruption dogged the reformers. It was one thing to protest that *'these societies have [never] been so much as treated with, by any person-whatsoever, to give informations with any promise of a reward'*.<sup>208</sup> It was quite another to be forced by events to disown cheats and false informers who used the objectives of the reformation of manners movement as a shelter for extortion and malicious prosecutions.<sup>209</sup>

### Blasphemy and Lord's Day Offences

Four wholly new categories of offence appeared in the *Accounts* after 1707: keeping a gaming house, exercising trade on the Lord's Day, swearing and cursing, and drunkenness. These new categories were not without their particular problems as well. A report in *The Post Boy* in March 1709 highlights the difficulty of prosecuting the wealthy and powerful for illicit gaming. In this case two City constables from Broad Street Ward admitted that they had *'rudely'* arrested the Earl of Denbigh, Lord Craven and some of their friends for gaming in a house near the Royal Exchange and committed them to the Poultry Compter. The unfortunate officers were forced to declare themselves *'guilty of this great impudence'* and disclaim that the Earl and his friends were doing anything unlawful. Such servility in the face of the bad examples of great men contrasts strongly with the enthusiasm of the early days when it was reported that the Duke of Norfolk had been fined £5 for gambling on the Sabbath.<sup>210</sup> The fate of the efforts against gaming houses can be seen from the figures themselves which show a steady decline. This is borne out by the contemporary pamphlet *An Account of the Endeavours that have been used to Suppress Gaming Houses* (1712), which in its 1722 edition was forced to add the phrase *and of the Discouragements that have been met with*.<sup>211</sup>

Where drunkenness was concerned, the reformers of manners shared the concern of one of their preachers, the independent minister John Billingsley, who stressed that *'sobriety and love of liberty are twins that laugh and live, mourn and die together'*.<sup>212</sup> A considerable amount of the movement's propaganda effort was directed against reforming drunkards. By the summer of 1701 the London societies for reformation of manners claimed to have distributed over thirty thousand tracts against this sin alone in the capital's public houses and inns, and to have met with outright rejection in only a few.<sup>213</sup> Though they took care to distinguish alcoholic

<sup>208</sup> Yates, *Account of the Societies*, p. 11. See also *A Help to a National Reformation of Manners* (5th ed., 1706) containing abstracts of the penal laws, blank warrant forms, register forms, rules for constables and other officers as well as laymen giving informations, and other advice pertinent to running reforming societies.

<sup>209</sup> Matthew Clarke's *Sermon preached to the Societies for Reformation of Manners at Salters Hall* (1711), p. 15 claimed they were *'under the imputation of rashness and indiscretion, and which is worse, unfaithfulness and self-seeking'* due to the treachery of false reformers. See also *A Letter from the Man in the Moon to Mr. Anodyne Necklace* (1725).

<sup>210</sup> BL Loan 29/185, fol. 142 (14 August 1691).

<sup>211</sup> The 1722 edition attributed failure to collusion between constables and gaming house proprietors, pp. 22-26.

<sup>212</sup> *A Sermon preached to the Societies for Reformation of Manners at Salters Hall* (1706), p. 18.

<sup>213</sup> Edmund McClure, *A Chapter in English Church History* (1888), p. 137 citing SPCK Minutes for 16 June 1701.

inebriation from mental or physical disability which might account for staggering or slurred speech, the reformers from the figures given in the *Accounts* had a declining record of prosecutions for drunkenness.<sup>214</sup> The most probable reason for this was the anonymous urban context of this offence which precluded much personal knowledge of the frequenters of the capital's myriad drinking places. As the reformers were forced to admit, *'it's much safer in convicting persons of [drunkenness] in country towns, than in this populous city, where we hardly know our next neighbours'*.<sup>215</sup>

The newly listed offences of cursing and swearing were quite specific offences. The reformers of manners defined swearing as any affirmation or negation which lightly or disrespectfully used the words *'God, Lord, or Jesus Christ'*. Thus *'By my soul'* was not swearing, though no good Christian should use it, whereas an appeal to *'God's wounds'* or *'God's blood'* was a punishable offence. Cursing was less well defined, but generally involved any invocation of God or the devil for vengeance or harm. A curse such as *'The plague take you'* was punishable even though it did not mention sacred names because it wished death on another person.<sup>216</sup> Informers associated with the reforming societies were advised to *'remember the words of the oath or curse that they may be able to repeat them if it be required'* in court.<sup>217</sup> This lesson was learnt from the difficulties experienced in enforcing 21 Jas. I, c. 20 (the principal statute prohibiting swearing), which required any information presented to a magistrate to embody the exact words of the curse or profane oath. These words also had to be included in any magistrate's warrant. Omission of this direct quotation could invalidate the whole enforcement procedure and make a mockery of the reformers' efforts. Constables and other officers witnessing swearing or cursing could on their own authority carry an offender before a justice of the peace for summary conviction. But they could not arrest persons for these offences solely on the information of a third party without a specific information first being lodged with a magistrate and his warrant being issued against a specified person for a clearly detailed offence.<sup>218</sup>

Efforts to suppress cursing and swearing received legislative aid in 1695 with the passing of 6&7 Will. III, c.11 *'for the more effectual suppressing of profane cursing and swearing'*. This improved on the Jacobean statute by reducing from two to one the number of witnesses necessary to obtain a conviction. Under the 1695 statute,

<sup>214</sup> *Some Prudential Methods that have been recommended to Those that give Informations* circa.1699, *passim.*, unpaginated.

<sup>215</sup> SPCK Papers of Moment, p. 97. See Josiah Woodward *A Dissuasive from the Sin of Drunkenness* (1701, often reprinted) and William Assheton, *A Discourse against Drunkenness* (1692, often reprinted). Both stress that this vice weakens the collective physical strength of the nation.

<sup>216</sup> SPCK Papers of Moment, p. 96 elaborates these criteria. See also Josiah Woodward's two tracts *A Kind Caution to Profane Swearers* (n. d.) and *Serious Reflections on the Grievous Scandal of Profane Language in Conversation* (n. d.); also *A Letter from a Gentleman in Manchester to his Friend concerning a Notorious blasphemer* (1694).

<sup>217</sup> *Some Prudential Methods*, op. cit.

<sup>218</sup> Bodl. Rawlinson MS D. 129, fol. 33 For legal precedents see PRO, KB 33,24/8 and 13/10.

common people forfeited one shilling, and their betters twice that amount, upon first conviction. Second and third convictions doubled and trebled these fines and defaulters could have their goods distrained and sold by the parish officers or be committed to the stocks. Swearers and cursers under sixteen years of age could be whipped by the constable or their parents or masters. Magistrates neglecting their duties under this new law were liable to £5 fines and informers proving judicial laxity were entitled to half of this amount.<sup>219</sup> As a further encouragement to its enforcement this statute protected magistrates and parish officers from vexatious counter-suits and guaranteed them treble costs if any action against them was proved groundless. To facilitate public awareness of its provisions, the new law was to be read four times yearly in all churches and chapels, and clergymen neglecting this could be fined 20s. Presumably most ministers of whatever doctrinal hue would have concurred with the Huguenot Daniel Ducros in promoting such laws furthering *'la presente reformation que le Ciel nous inspire de faire de toute les habitudes naturelles...'*<sup>220</sup>

Finally, the statute ordered all magistrates and principal parish officers to keep a register of all convictions made under it and to produce this record periodically at the Quarter Sessions for auditing. Leading reformers of manners such as Edward Harley had long been keen on the enactment of such legislation as a remedy for the shortcomings of the Jacobean anti-swearing statute and drafts had circulated among parliamentary allies of the reformers since the early 'nineties. Anthony Bowyer was chiefly responsible for steering its parliamentary passage and the Royal Assent was given in April 1695.<sup>221</sup> Nonetheless, the reformers of manners did not get everything they wished for from this 1695 Act and still longed for legal help where the giving of informations was concerned. This was the rock on which their efforts to promote law enforcement broke again and again, though they tried for further legislative remedies as the 1690s drew to a close (see below).

The new law against swearing and cursing was hailed at the time as a breakthrough, and reformation of manners propaganda claimed that seventy to eighty warrants per week were issued in London in its wake, *'which hath given so great and remarkable a check to those scandalous sins, that our constables sometimes of late have found it difficult to take up a swearer in divers of our streets and markets, where, within a few years past, horrid oaths, curses, and imprecations, were heard day and night.'*<sup>222</sup> Perhaps the most impressive claim for the measure's effectiveness came from Ireland where the statute took effect in September 1695. A London reformer of

<sup>219</sup> *The Obligations of a Justice of the Peace to be diligent in the execution of the Penal Laws against Profaneness and Debauchery for the Effecting of a National Reformation* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., 1702), *passim*. The half sheet could be folded and posted to magistrates. See also John Lacy, *A Moral Test* (1704) against lax magistrates.

<sup>220</sup> Bodl. Rawlinson MS C. 984, fol. 139.

<sup>221</sup> BL Loan 29/186, fol. 233 (Edward Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 17 December 1692). An early draft is EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 369-382. For the bill's passage see *Commons Journal* XI, p. 217ff. Anthony Bowyer was MP for Southwark until his death in 1709. He was also a barrister and Treasurer of the Inner Temple and a Whig; see Henry Horwitz ed., *Parliamentary Diary of Narcissus Luttrell* (Oxford, 1973), p. 48.

<sup>222</sup> Yates, *Account of the Societies*, p. 18.

manners sent Dublin sympathisers one thousand blank warrants to be used against swearers and these were so quickly used that another thousand were ordered.<sup>223</sup>

In contrast to these claims, the published *Accounts* showed a decline in the number of prosecutions for swearing and cursing. One reformation sympathiser attributed this to the unwillingness of private individuals to give informations, however simplified the law might be made in order to facilitate convictions. '*Few have the courage or the conscience*', he lamented, '*to bring the blasphemer to an account, and make him suffer the law... and thus all becomes to no effect, the whole provision but a mere mockery and the law of the land, no less than that of God... a sport and May-game, instead of a terror to evil-doers*'.<sup>224</sup> If one credits Ned Ward's caustic *London Spy*, common people were more likely to repay the reformers with redoubled oaths at being deprived of their shilling than to thank them for safeguarding their souls.<sup>225</sup> Other writers complained that clergymen as well as magistrates and the maligned parish officers were reluctant to enforce laws prohibiting swearing despite the obligations imposed by their oaths of office.<sup>226</sup>

It is impossible to give a clear verdict on the usefulness of 6&7 Will. III, c.11 to the reformation of manners campaign against swearing and cursing. It seems likely, however, that the general public's unwillingness to inform against swearers negated any advantage hoped for from the legislation. The 1695 Act and its Jacobean predecessor were both repealed by 19 George II, c. 21 which abolished the practice of conviction for the offence on a magistrate's warrant in the absence of the accused. Henceforward those bringing charges had to confront the alleged offender face to face before a magistrate before conviction could occur. It is significant that the reformers of manners acknowledged that this was the only way to ensure successful prosecutions many years before this change in the law, for they tried wherever possible to ensure that informer and accused both appeared before the magistrate.<sup>227</sup> No doubt the risk of vexatious charges of neighbour against neighbour as well as the odium and expense that contested prosecutions would incur helped decide them on this approach. Even with this innovation swearing proved uncontrollable. As Sir Richard Steele replied to the reformer John

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<sup>223</sup> *Letter from a Person of Quality in Dublin to his Friend in London* (1697), quoted by Woodward, *Religious Societies*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>224</sup> *A Letter from a Minister to his Parishioners, showing the indispensable Duty incumbent on all Persons to give Informations to the Magistrate* (2nd ed., 1703), *passim*, unpaginated

<sup>225</sup> *The London Spy*, pt. xv, pp. 364-365.

<sup>226</sup> *A Letter to a Minister of the Church of England, concerning the Societies for Reformation of Manners* (1710), pp.6-7. See also Daniel Defoe's remark in *An Essay upon Projects* (1697) that '*laws, acts of Parliament, and proclamations are baubles and banters, the laughter of the lewd party, and never had... any influence upon [swearing]; nor are any of our magistrates fond or forward of putting them in execution*', quoted in J. T. Boulton ed., *Daniel Defoe* (1965), p. 31.

<sup>227</sup> SPCK Papers of Moment, p. 96. See also *The Case of Witnessing against Offenders Face to Face Considered* (1704), *passim*.



Chamberlayne in March 1714, when reproved by the latter for swearing oaths, *'the times are the worst that ever were for reforming that sin above all others'*.<sup>228</sup>

Another attempt at legislative improvement where suppression of blasphemy both spoken and written was concerned was made by the reformers of manners early in 1698. A Commons committee composed an "Address to King William" following a debate on the state of the nation's religion asking that encouragement be given to all office holders to discourage corrupt manners.<sup>229</sup> Edward Harley was very instrumental in achieving this, having persuaded his friend Sir John Phillips to move the House to draw up the Address to the King. Phillips spoke *'with great ingenuity'* in the debate *'of how dangerous a consequence this thing of irreligion and profaneness must be to the whole nation'*. He was supported by leading Country Tories such as John Howe, Edward's elder brother Robert Harley, Sir Christopher Musgrave and Sir William Trumbull. This last gentleman composed the actual "Address" which when presented to the King on 17 February 1698, urged measures to suppress profaneness and immorality, as well as the authors of irreligious and blasphemous books.<sup>230</sup> King William seemed agreeable to this request, and leave was given on 6 February to Sir John Phillips and Edward Harley to prepare and introduce a bill embodying the essence of the "Address".<sup>231</sup> At the Commons' request, William also issued a *Proclamation for Preventing and Punishing Immorality and Profaneness* (24 February 1698) stressing that *'nothing can prove a greater dishonour to a well-ordered government, where the Christian faith is professed, nor is likelier to provoke God to withdraw his mercy and blessing from us, and instead thereof to inflict heavy and severe judgments upon this Kingdom, than the open and avowed practice of vice, immorality and profaneness.'*<sup>232</sup>

Here was a succinct statement of reformation of manners philosophy linking the visible manners of the nation with the continued protection of God and success of England's internal and external concerns. The legislation which finally emerged from this process as 9&10 Will. III, c. 3, however, was really more concerned with the suppression of the authors of blasphemous books and pamphlets than with spoken profanities.<sup>233</sup> Perhaps this reflected then current concerns among London magistrates for the corrupting influence of playhouses and print dealers.<sup>234</sup> The assault on the stage led by Jeremy Collier was then boiling up and it seems likely

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<sup>228</sup> Bodl. Rawlinson MS C. 933, fol. 99 verso.

<sup>229</sup> Luttrell, *Brief Relation*, IV, p. 342ff: also *CSPD*, 9-11 Feb. 1698.

<sup>230</sup> BL Loan 29/189, fol. 21 (Edward Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 12 February 1698) describes the genesis and progress of the Commons Address.

<sup>231</sup> Kennett, *History of England*, III, p. 745.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> For the nature of the debate see *The Considerations upon the Bill for the more Effectual Suppressing [of] Blasphemy and Profaneness animadverted* (1698). The bill passed on third reading by 122 to 58 on 30 March 1698

<sup>234</sup> Luttrell, *Brief Relation*, IV, pp. 378-379.

that this subsumed the interests of the reformers of manners and their parliamentary friends away from swearing and cursing in the more vulgar sense.<sup>235</sup>

A guess can be made about the relative ineffectiveness of King William's proclamation of February 1698 from the fact that it had to be reissued in December 1699, and during Queen Anne's reign re-emerged in only slightly amended form every few years.<sup>236</sup> On the whole Parliament was not in a mood to lead the nation towards a visible reform of its manners. Another bill introduced by Sir John Phillips to suppress adultery and fornication failed to attract enough votes in committee to be reported to the whole House in February 1699. The disposition of the nation's armed forces in early 1699 was a far more pressing concern for most MPs than the quagmire of moral regulation despite the printing and preaching of the reformers of manners and their friends.<sup>237</sup> While impressive in the tenor of their language, the legislation and proclamations which the reformers of manners succeeded in influencing were not of great practical use to the law enforcement campaign against swearing and cursing. Effectiveness in this area still rested on the willingness of private citizens or reformation-minded parish officers to give information to magistrates about offences they observed.

The concluding part of this chapter will examine the role of particularly diligent informers in obtaining convictions for Sabbath-breaking and also consider the difficulties inherent in this aspect of reformation work. Defending God's special day was integral to the reformers' defence of God's sacred names from defilement in common speech. Offences profaning the Lord's Day were the exercise of one's ordinary trade or calling and participation in sports or pastimes during sermon time, to which should also be added tippling or frequenting alehouses when one was supposed to be in church. Reformation of manners preachers bemoaned the situation in the burgeoning and ill-policed outer suburbs of London where bustling streets and '*licentious sports*' rather than churchgoing was the order of the day on Sundays.<sup>238</sup> Whatever the type of profanation, its toleration was an invitation to divine judgments not only on the individual offender but also on the society permitting such outrages to go unpunished. As in all else, this was the spring animating the practical side of law enforcement by the reformers of manners. Their efforts were directed towards persons of a fairly low social rank since they believed that ordinary people were the most vulnerable to corruption on Sundays from the

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<sup>235</sup> For the part of reformers of manners in this see Sister Anthony Rose, *The Jeremy Collier Stage Controversy, 1698-1726* (1937, rpt. New York, 1966) and the revisionist article by Aubrey Williams, 'No Cloistered Virtue: Or, Playwright versus Priest in 1698', *PMLA*, 90, no. 2 (March 1975), pp. 234-246.

<sup>236</sup> Anne's repetitious *Proclamation for Piety and Virtue and for Preventing and Punishing of Vices* appeared in 1702, 1703 and 1708. The early Hanoverians also issued it with little alteration.

<sup>237</sup> BL Loan 29/189, vol. 57 (Edward Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 17 January 1699) and Luttrell, *Brief Relation*, IV. p. 481. Some MPs felt it was '*unfit for a House of Commons to be enacting matters of faith and to be setting up inquisitions that may bring men into snares and make conversation unsafe*', CSPD (30 March 1698).

<sup>238</sup> Billingsley, *Sermon preached at Salters Hall* (1706) p. 32.

twin allurements of profit and diversion.<sup>239</sup> As a leader of the Thames bargees told the dissenting minister Edmund Calamy, many working people had never heard the name of Jesus Christ except in a profane oath and knew nothing of proper religious observances.<sup>240</sup> Faced with this laxity, the reformers of manners saw themselves as shock troops combatting the worst manifestations of profaneness and irreligion and thereby preserving at least the outward forms of Christian discipline until something more permanent could be done to instil a true sense of personal reformation and modesty into those untouched by it. Foreign travellers commented on the symbolic centrality of Sabbath observance in England and the Frenchman Henri Misson de Valbourg observed that in the printed confessions of executed criminals, '*Sabbath-breaking is the crime the poor wretches always begin with*'.<sup>241</sup> Reformers of manners implicitly understood this connection between religious observance and standards of personal behaviour and feared the ultimate consequences for society if both were corrupted.

The reformers of manners gave quite detailed instructions to their sympathisers concerning profanations of the Sabbath. Informers were advised to give informations to magistrates when they saw anyone going about their usual calling on that day. They were also to inform

*against such as they see offending by the weighing, measuring, bargaining for, or delivery of goods, or receiving money for them; as also against bakers appearing in the streets with their baskets, or barbers with their pots, basin, or periwig-box; shoemakers, tailors, hatters, or other tradesmen carrying out their work and ware; and against all kinds of manual labour, except in cases of necessity and mercy.*<sup>242</sup>

Exactly what constituted an illegal transaction was a complex question, and informers were cautioned to ensure that the activity was not in fact innocent. Informers were not to harry '*those that live in cellars*

*... unless they are seen to sell their goods, because such persons have some pretence for keeping open their cellar doors, or windows, for the benefit of the light, or air; but if any wares, fruits, etc. be exposed without or above such door or windows, or in any shops with the windows open, or upon stalls belonging to the persons that own such goods, or not, and though there be nothing to be sold, these are sufficient grounds for information.*<sup>243</sup>

<sup>239</sup> Richard Hamersley, *Advice to Sunday Barbers against Trimming on the Lord's Day: shewing the Evil of that Great Sin that they live in by Breaking God's Holy Law* (1706) is typical.

<sup>240</sup> G. M. Trevelyan, *England Under Queen Anne* (1930), I, p. 73 citing J. T. Rutt, *Life of Calamy* (1830). For the panoply of customs and regulations surrounding the English Sabbath see W. B. Whitaker, *The Eighteenth Century Sunday, 1677-1837* (1940), esp. chap. 1.

<sup>241</sup> de Valbourg, *Memoirs and Observations*, p. 310.

<sup>242</sup> *Some Prudential Methods*, *passim.*, unpaginated.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*

In the early years of the campaign against profanations of the Sabbath the reformers' practice was to conceal the name of the person supplying the information of the offence and for the magistrate to issue his warrant solely on this sworn private information. Though valid in law, this practice invited false and malicious prosecutions and provided ammunition to the reformation's critics. By the end of the 1690s, therefore, a change had occurred similar to that pertaining to the giving of informations against cursing and swearing. Though the statute 29 Car. II, c. 7 did not require it, it became common practice *'to summon the offenders and appear against them before the magistrates'* in the hope that face to face allegations would increase the credibility of the reformers' efforts. This confrontation would also make easier the magistrate's task of separating innocent acts of necessity and mercy from activities prohibited on Sundays.<sup>244</sup>

In order to have a clear judicial interpretation of the power of constables who aided the reformers' campaign against Sabbath breaking, a series of questions was put to the eminent Serjeant at Law Francis Pemberton sometime before his death in June 1697. Pemberton replied that a constable's office empowered him to *'stop any that he shall find travelling or driving carts, horses, cattle, etc. on the Lord's Day and carry him before a justice of the peace to convict them... without any warrant'*. The same summary jurisdiction applied to sports and other pastimes on the Sabbath and to those the constable observed selling goods--except for milk--during sermon time in the morning or afternoon. Serjeant Pemberton was also aware that constables and other officers were tempted to extort money from offenders and he ended his replies with a caution to be scrupulous in the handing over of monies to the parish authorities and *'to do what he doth in this case openly and above board and take good witnesses of what he doth in it for his own justification'*<sup>245</sup>

These judicial opinions clearly illustrate how much depended on the motivation and integrity of the individual parish officer witnessing an offence. He was the official counterpart of the piously disinterested citizen who was continually encouraged to give private informations to the magistrate. The reformers always found the latter in short supply and there is no reason to suppose that parish officers of the zeal of the martyred John Dent were any more numerous among the official law enforcers of the day.<sup>246</sup> A complaint from some reformers of manners in Southwark in 1695 highlights common grievances about the laxness of many parish officers. Thirty-six householders supporting the reformation endeavour petitioned the Surrey magistrates claiming that *'out of conscience and duty towards God and our love and loyalty to our King and country'* they had tried to suppress profanations of the Lord's Day in their district. But their efforts were thwarted *'for the want of the assistance of constables and other officers in the convicting and punishing of such wicked and*

<sup>244</sup> SPCK Papers of Moment, p. 96

<sup>245</sup> Bodl. Rawlinson MS D. 129, fols. 32-35

<sup>246</sup> See the reformers' tract *The Oath of a Constable, so far as it relates to his Apprehending Night-Walkers and Idle Persons, and his Presenting offences to the Statutes* (1701), often reprinted; and Josiah Woodward, *An Earnest Persuasive to the Serious Observance of the Lord's Day* (1702), often reprinted

*abominable practices... '.* They further alleged that the constables' indifference exposed them to abuse and reproach from offenders and that *'the people in the streets [were] stirred up against us to the hazard and danger of our lives'*.<sup>247</sup> Some of the parish officers' recalcitrance is understandable. After all, they had to go on living in the same neighbourhoods as those they should have prosecuted for Sabbath offences long after their terms of office expired. Animosities incurred through a zeal for reforming the manners of one's neighbours could rebound on one's trade and personal affairs long afterwards.<sup>248</sup>

The Middlesex Justices of the Peace also complained frequently of the ineffectiveness of constables and churchwardens in executing laws relating to Sabbath observance. In particular, the JPs complained that officers failed to control itinerant persons going about *'in the footpaths and public streets... with wheelbarrows, wherein they carry oranges, apples, nuts and other wares, and expose them to sale, and carry and use dice to encourage passersby and others to play for such of their goods, and other unlawful games'*. These vendors were also condemned by the authorities as clandestine drink-sellers whose *'strong waters'* lured the unwary to their crooked games of chance.<sup>249</sup> Far from being hounded off the public thoroughfares by the constabulary, these barrow traders flourished in London's streets and alleys into the eighteenth century and their activities abetted the explosion in the consumption of cheap and fiery spirits during Walpole's time.<sup>250</sup>

Another nuisance which tended to multiply on Sundays and was similarly outwith the control of the parish officers was disorderly men and women strolling about and singing and selling lascivious ballads and prints. These lewd minstrels drew crowds and with crowds came pickpockets and whores which led to the corruption of youth as well as thefts. By Queen Anne's reign this problem of street-corner ballad singing had become a serious problem in the eyes of the reformers of manners who decried *'their debauching our youth by their lewd songs'*. If good Christian households neglected catechising their young and singing psalms together, then *'these wretched creatures are suffered to fill the minds of our children with the Devil's lessons'*.<sup>251</sup> Order after order exists in the Middlesex Sessions Books exhorting and threatening parish officers to be more diligent in apprehending these lewd Sabbath-breakers, but

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<sup>247</sup> EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 499-506; see also *The Reformed Gentleman, or the Old English Morals rescued from the immoralities of the Age... with an Abridgment of the relevant laws pertaining to Lewdness* (1693), sig. A4.

<sup>248</sup> See the tirade against informers and petty complainers in James Wishton, *England's Calamities Discovered* (1696), *passim*.

<sup>249</sup> MRO Sessions Book 575, p. 56 (August 1700).

<sup>250</sup> M. Dorothy George; *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (1925, rpt. 1966), p. 45.

<sup>251</sup> Billingsley, *Sermon preached at Salters Hall* (1706) p. 33. See also *An Earnest Exhortation to Householdors to set up the Worship of God in their Families* (1702); and Thomas Risley, *The Cursed Family; or, a short tract showing the Pernicious influence of Wicked Prayerless Houses upon this Church and Kingdom* (1700).

the repetition alone indicates the relative impotence of official law enforcement mechanisms in this area.<sup>252</sup>

The auxiliary methods of the reformers of manners, too, seem to have been ineffective in controlling this and other profanations of the Sabbath as the figures in the published *Accounts* indicate. It is fortunate that the anonymous totals printed in the extant *Accounts* can be supplemented, at least as far as the offence '*exercising trade on the Lord's Day*' is concerned, by prosecution records kept by one of the London reforming societies between 1704 and 1716.<sup>253</sup> The nine volume record is not continuous and the degree of completeness varies, but all entries pertain to London parishes and the same names recur regularly as informers. Out of some 10,500 offences recorded during the period, about 10,250 pertain to 'Sunday trading' in some sense. The printed registers have space for recording the following information: name of parochial officer and date he received magistrate's warrant (for auditing purposes at Quarter Sessions); name of magistrate signing the warrant; offender's name and parish; date and place of the offence; number of previous convictions; amount of fine; name of person bringing the charge. In some registers the heading '*further proceedings*' listed the manner in which the fine was disposed of by churchwardens or whether goods were distrained and sold in lieu of a fine. In a few cases the entry '*dismissed promising amendment*' appears.

Magistrates signing warrants recorded in these registers include names well known as favouring the reformers of manners and their objectives: viz., Sir Richard Levett, Ralph Hartley, John Chamberlayne, and Sir Thomas Abney. The martyred constable John Dent is listed as the person bringing the charges in some entries. With the exception of a handful of offences mainly for tippling in ale-houses during sermon time, the offences are profanations of the Lord's Day by the exercise of trade. The symbols used to record offences, however, indicate that the registers were all purpose ones and could have been used for other crimes: viz., S=swearing, C=cursing, D=drunkenness, ET=exercising trade on the Lord's Day, T=unlawful tippling on the Lord's Day during sermon time and PT=permitting unlawful tippling (i.e. landlords who allowed customers to drink at prohibited hours on Sundays). Such a formal presentation of reformation work indicates a high degree of sophistication in record keeping, and it is little wonder that the City authorities and also statutes such as 6&7 Will. III, c. II against swearing and cursing strove to make the official system of crosschecking and accounting before the Quarter Sessions for the diligence of constables as efficient as the system devised by the reformers of manners.

These Bodleian prosecution registers relate to a considerable degree to the activities of one man, Jonathan Wright, whose name appears not only on the fly leaves of many books, but also under the heading '*convicted by*' or '*at the complaint of*' in many cases. Perhaps like John Dent, Jonathan Wright was a reformation-minded

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<sup>252</sup> MRO Sessions Book 653, p. 57 (October 1707) is typical.

<sup>253</sup> Bodl. Rawlinson MSS D. 1396-1404; see also Rawlinson MSS C. 855.

parish constable. What is certain is that he was an active informer for the reformation societies and thus, according to the founder reformer, William Yates of Lincoln's Inn, a '*corner stone*' of the whole undertaking.<sup>254</sup> The relatively few names which appear with Wright's as informers do not indicate that only these men undertook this task, but rather that they functioned as full time agents funnelling informations from private individuals to magistrates known to be sympathetic.<sup>255</sup> Wright probably had experience of the correct style of warrants and the procedure preferred by the magistrates and thus could ensure speedy and successful prosecutions and convictions. As an agent for the reformers, Jonathan Wright would also be open to suspicion for bringing charges in order to profit from that part of the fine which the law allowed magistrates to use as rewards to informers. But the gentlemen directing the London reformation of manners campaign repeatedly vindicated their agents from such calumnies by insisting that '*these brave men have acted with... great prudence as well as zeal*' and received not '*the least advantage by any convictions upon these statutes against profaneness and debauchery, the money arising thereby being wholly appropriated to the poor...*'<sup>256</sup>

The survival of these registers listing men such as Jonathan Wright, John Dent the constable, and their associates among the frequent informers testifies to the force of these men's belief in the objectives of the law enforcement campaign mounted by the London reforming societies. These men worked to obtain convictions as a remedy to lax social discipline and in the service both of God and of England they were prepared for the dangers associated with enforcing moral laws among the lower ranks of society in late seventeenth century London. Their targets, at least in these records, were not always the dregs of society but oftentimes tradesmen and shopkeepers, some of whom might have been men of substance in their own neighbourhoods possibly possessing a vote in Common Council and, if livery company members, parliamentary elections. It was not, therefore, only bawds and whores and common swearers in alehouses who felt the zeal of the reformers of manners. Though in the years after 1715 prosecutions for Sunday trading did lag behind those for being lewd and disorderly. By 1730, when the *Accounts* again distinguished separate categories of offenders, prosecutions for exercising trade on Sundays far outnumbered any other category until the Forty-fourth, and last, *Account* was published in 1738. By that time the reformation movement was a mere shadow of its former size and ideological richness in the days of William III and Queen Anne when foreign threats and domestic uncertainties gave the law enforcement campaign its sense of immediacy.

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<sup>254</sup> Yates, *Account of the Societies*, p. 10.

<sup>255</sup> Wright was one of the '*fit persons in convenient places of the City and suburbs... to whom... informers shall resort upon every information which they have to make, which persons will take their several informations in a printed register....*' , described in EUL Laing MS III, 394, p. 50.

<sup>256</sup> Yates, *Account of the Societies*, p. 11.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TWO LESSER TARGETS FOR REFORMATION

This chapter examines what at first might appear unlikely targets for the reformers of manners: Bartholomew Fair and London's homosexual population. But it must be born in mind that reformation of manners was primarily about a visible improvement in behaviour, however achieved, and therefore the excess drinking, swearing and lasciviousness of the play booths and stalls at Bartholomew Fair as well as the practices of male homosexuals attracted a significant amount of attention from the reformers.

#### Bartholomew Fair

By 1688 Bartholomew Fair was greatly transformed from both the purpose and duration of its mediaeval original. What began as a three-day market for cattle in the open spaces of West Smithfield had grown into an annual fortnight's revels in late August and early September. The promise of entertainment and pleasure drew far larger crowds than the commercial aspect of the Fair, despite periodic efforts by City authorities to return the event to its original purpose.<sup>257</sup>

Efforts to control the Fair were complicated by several factors, mostly to do with its profitability; petitions seeking the Fair's limitation often mentioned the pernicious influence of its gaming booths and raffles. Just before Bartholomew Fair opened in August 1687 the *London Gazette* announced the suppression of such nuisances. But monopoly profiteers not reformers had engineered this action, since the *Gazette* later revealed that four gentlemen had been granted exclusive rights to manage the Royal Oak Lottery at the Fair and no gambling of other sorts was allowed without obtaining a licence from the Royal Oak patentees.<sup>258</sup> The Crown profited handsomely by selling this patent and its owners gained the privilege of lightening the purses of the fairgoers. But to reformation-minded men there was little difference between impoverishment by this 'official' lottery and the temptations of its private enterprise predecessors. Accordingly agitation to have the Royal Oak Lottery suppressed was a continuing theme in the general reformation of manners effort against Bartholomew Fair.

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<sup>257</sup> The best discussion of Bartholomew Fair is Henry Morley, *Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair* (1880), supplemented by Sybil Rosenfeld, *The Theatre of the London Fairs in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1960).

<sup>258</sup> *London Gazette*, (23 August 1687)



The Royal Oak Lottery's establishment served as a magnet for other allurements to vice and disorder according to the reformers. Quarrelling drunken gamblers in Smithfield in 1690 caused a bloody affray.<sup>259</sup> Reformers of manners finally persuaded some Middlesex magistrates to petition Queen Mary (following the Proclamation against vice and profaneness in January 1692) that the Lottery was *'the impoverishing and utter ruin of many ... to which there is a great resort of idle and disorderly persons to the great disturbance of the public peace...'*<sup>260</sup> Their petition had little or no effect.

A further element in the reformers' hatred of Bartholomew Fair was the corrupting influence on ordinary people, especially the young and servants, of its rude plays and other entertainments. Especially condemned were the crude comedies or 'drolls' acted in elaborate if temporary booths in West Smithfield which by the end of the seventeenth century were *'highly advanced in wit, and as much in wickedness'* and whose cast consisted of *'parties detached (in vacation time) from the playhouses, to be zanies at the Fair ...'*<sup>261</sup>

Some drolls were political satires, and reformers were not prepared to allow burlesques on the shortcomings of England's armed forces to undermine national confidence. Thus when droll actors in 1693 lampooned the destruction of Sir George Rooke's Smyrna Fleet by the French in the Bay of Lagos, reformation-minded constables took the lead in suppressing the droll.<sup>262</sup> As far as they were concerned, then and in later years, the fair produced *'a confluence of all impurities, to the great annoyance of the adjacent places, and prejudice to the whole town'*.<sup>263</sup> A petition by the London reformers of manners to the City of London Court of Aldermen in the early 1690s embodies all their hostile views on Bartholomew Fair. It complained that

*through length of time and the depravity of manners and want of care and good government of the said Fair, the lawful and advantageous use and benefit thereof is now of late wholly lost and the same is become a mere riotous and tumultuous assembly of the worst of people of both sexes and very many murders, robberies, and riots and tumultuous outrages are frequently occasioned thereby to the ... apparent corruption of the apprentices, youth, and inhabitants of this City and parts adjacent ...*<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Luttrell, *Brief Relation*, II, (1 September 1690)

<sup>260</sup> EUL Laing MS III,394, pp. 153-157

<sup>261</sup> *Account of the Last Bartholomew Fair* (1702), p. 7. See also A.G. Craig, "The Archbishop and the Prodigal Son" (unpublished, now in St Andrews University Library) for the content of a previously unreported droll performed in 1723-24, drawing on Wake MSS in Christ Church Library, Oxford, and Bishop Edmund Gibson MSS at St Andrews University Library.

<sup>262</sup> Morley, *Memoirs*, p. 260. For the naval debacle and the cry for scapegoats see A. N. Ryan, 'William III and the Brest Fleet in the Nine Years War' in R. Hatton and J. S. Bromley eds., *William III and Louis XIV* (Liverpool, 1968), p. 61ff.

<sup>263</sup> *Last Bartholomew Fair*, p. 2.

<sup>264</sup> EUL Laing MS III,394, pp. 491-492.

Sometimes City authorities were sympathetic to such appeals. In early August 1691 Robert Harley wrote excitedly to his father that the reformers had persuaded Lord Mayor Sir Thomas Pilkington and the Court of Aldermen to limit the Fair to its original duration and purpose.<sup>265</sup> Harley and others in the capital hoped that this would prevent the lewdness and violence in West Smithfield of previous years. But by mid-August he was forced to report that more powerful interests had prevailed over those of reformation of manners and no less a person than Queen Mary had been *'persuaded to send to the Lord Mayor to enlarge the time of Bartholomew Fair to what is usual'*.<sup>266</sup> Perhaps the Earl of Warwick, as lord of the manor of West Smithfield, or the Governors of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, who both profited from the ground rents of booths and stalls let during the Fair, had intervened with the Government on this occasion. Undeterred, the Fair's opponents procured an order from the Court of Aldermen banning all stage entertainments. This too met resistance and as Robert Harley lamented just before the fortnight's revels began, *'others are resolved to keep them up the fourteen days, which may occasion a tumult in suppressing them if they go on as they seem designed to do '*.<sup>267</sup>

These prohibitions on the Fair's activities tended to have no more than a seasonal effect at most. By the summer of 1694 Smithfield residents and reformers of manners were again complaining about play booths and actors. In late July Robert's younger brother, Edward Harley, a prominent member of the First Society for Reformation of Manners in London, wrote that *'through the goodness of God, we have obtained an order for suppressing the disorders of Bartholomew Fair, and reducing it to three days'*.<sup>268</sup> But this met the fate of its 1691 predecessor, and the same situation occurred again in 1697. By 1700 things looked more hopeful for a permanent curb on the Fair's excesses. Sir Richard Levett, noted for his support of the reformers objectives, was now Lord Mayor and in mid-May a committee of magistrates was considering ways and means of controlling the Fair. In mid-June the Court of Aldermen publicly declared its *'hearty desire to promote reformation'*, and commanded anyone associated with Bartholomew Fair

*that they do not let, set, hire, or use any booth, shed, stall or other erection whatsoever, to be used or employed for interludes, stage-plays, comedies, gaming places, lotteries, disorderly music houses, or other occasions or opportunities for enticing, assembling or congregating idle, loose, vicious and debauched people together, under colour and pretence of innocent diversions and recreation.*<sup>269</sup>

Not everyone was convinced that a hatred of vice was the sole reason for this declaration. Claims flew about that the authorities really intended to suppress the

<sup>265</sup> BL Loan 29/185, fol. 142 (Robert Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 4 August 1691).

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., fol. 152 (same to same, 15 August 1691).

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., fol. 161 (same to same, 22 August 1691).

<sup>268</sup> BL Loan 29/187, fol. 259 (Edward Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 28 July 1694).

<sup>269</sup> Guildhall Broadside 17.90.

political content of some of the drolls and used reformation of manners language as a convenient guise.<sup>270</sup> Given their hostile attitude to satire in earlier years, and the abundant opportunities for it in 1700 provided by problems of childless William III's successors and the eventual disposition of the Spanish throne, there is no doubt some truth in this charge. On another point, the Earl of Warwick intervened in the squabble to protect his ground rents and forced the City Corporation to allow the Fair's usual duration.<sup>271</sup> As Narcissus Luttrell noted, as the opening date approached *'booths are building and the Fair will be kept as formerly.'*<sup>272</sup>

Undeterred, Lord Mayor Levett countered the Earl with an order allowing only rope-dancing in the booths and saw to it that several music booths, noted as haunts of whores and pickpockets, were destroyed.<sup>273</sup> This had some beneficial effects if one believes the broadside writer who visited the Fair that season in search of music booths, but complained that *'reformation of manners had suppressed them all but one, [and] I declined to go thither lest I should be thought a debauched person.'*<sup>274</sup> The pamphleteer Tom Brown confirmed this situation with his lament that *'all the drolls of glorious memory are routed, defeated and sent to grass without any hopes of a reprieve.'*<sup>275</sup> The next year, the Grand Jury for the City of London presented Bartholomew Fair as a nuisance *'next only to that of the playhouses'* and the City authorities responded by re-imposing their ban on play-booths and drolls.<sup>276</sup>

Encouraged by two seasons' success against Smithfield lewdness reformers and their sympathisers in the City administration anticipated the 1702 Fair with *'effectual provision ... against those profligate troops and companies, that like Goths and Vandals, invade Smithfield every Bartholomew season.'*<sup>277</sup> An event steeling their determination against the Fair was the murder of reforming constable John Cooper and the wounding of several other officers at May Fair that year when *'some ill people ... began a hideous clamour against reformation, raised a senseless mob and at last animated a parcel of rude soldiers to assault'* the officers.<sup>278</sup>

Not to be outflanked by the authorities, the droll booth owners and their actors invaded the fair grounds earlier than usual to erect their booths and ripped down Lord Mayor Gore's proclamation limiting the Fair to three days of mercantile activity

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<sup>270</sup> See *A Letter from an Actress of the Play-house to a Stroller in the Country, concerning ... the Suppression of Drolls in Bartholomew Fair* (1701), *passim*.

<sup>271</sup> Luttrell, *Brief Relation*, IV, p. 664.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 678.

<sup>273</sup> Rosenfeld, *Theatre of the London Fairs*, p. 13, citing *Post Man*, (22-24 August 1700).

<sup>274</sup> Morley, *Memoirs*, p. 274 citing original pamphlet now lost, *A Walk to Smithfield, or the True Description of the Humours of Bartholomew Fair* (1701).

<sup>275</sup> Tom Brown, *Letters from the Dead to the Living* (1702), p. 39.

<sup>276</sup> Morley, *Memoirs*, p. 272.

<sup>277</sup> *Last Bartholomew Fair*, p. 1.

<sup>278</sup> Josiah Woodward, *A Sermon preached ... on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 1702, at the Funeral of Mr. John Cooper, a Constable, who was barbarously murdered at May Fair* (1702), p. 8. See also *A Full and True Account of the Apprehending and Taking of one William Wallis (A Serjeant of the Foot Guards) in Southwark, for the murder of Mr. Cooper, the Constable* (1709).

only. Unlike Mayor Levett in 1700, the City authorities in 1702 seemingly made no moves against this. The Fair ran its accustomed fortnight and the players '*held their customary revels, ... made an advantageous campaign, decamped and marched off unmolested with the spoils of vice ...*'<sup>279</sup> The 1702 restrictions on the Fair were dismal failures and there was a gap of almost six years before the reformers of manners again tackled the annual event they bemoaned as '*sufficient (by modest computation) to stock a nation with calamities and judgments for an age*'.<sup>280</sup>

In 1708, with crude drolls again flourishing in booths '*of extra-ordinary largeness ... used chiefly for stage plays, music and tippling*', Lord Mayor William Withers, a supporter of the reformation movement, determined to re-impose the three-day limit on Bartholomew Fair.<sup>281</sup> The City authorities brushed aside protests that this would prejudice the revenues of St. Bartholomew's Hospital and heeded the plea instead of '*between fifty and sixty of the chief residents*' of West Smithfield that the Fair had '*become a great enticement to the youth of this City, in the seeing of shows, raffling, and other extravagant and lewd courses, whereby they are led to unlawful means of getting money, to the loss of their masters and friends and at length to their own ruin.*'<sup>282</sup> At this time the City Corporation was leasing out management rights over the Fair for £100 per annum and this sum formed part of the mayoralty's endowment. But Mayor Withers placed the cause of moral reformation above personal profit and, according to the Rev. Thomas Bray, so successfully harried the Fair's vices that others tried the same tactics next year against May Fair, '*another of Satan's fortified places ...*'.<sup>283</sup>

Much depended on the personal interest in furthering reformation of manners objectives by successive Lord Mayors where the restraint of Bartholomew Fair was concerned. When such men as Sir Richard Levett or William Withers held the mayoralty, reformers could expect some degree of positive action to back up pious proclamations against droll booths, gambling and tippling at the Fair. In other years, the Fair flourished virtually unmolested. In 1710 there were complaints of a new temptation at Smithfield in the form of '*a large book of coloured figures and postures of such obscenity, that Rome itself would blush to look at it*'. This exhibition coincided with complaints about pornography in other parts of London. That Fair season over eighty persons were arrested for lewdness and debauchery, but compared to the hordes frequenting the Fair this was of minimal effect.<sup>284</sup> The best the authorities

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<sup>279</sup> *Last Bartholomew Fair*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>281</sup> Rosenfeld, *Theatre of the London Fairs*, p. 2, citing Journals of the Court of Common Council, 54, p. 692.

<sup>282</sup> *Reasons formerly Published for the Punctual Limiting of Bartholomew Fair to ... Three Days* (1711), pp. 31-32 is the petition presented to Court of Common Council on 1 July 1708.

<sup>283</sup> Thomas Bray, *For God or for Satan: being a Sermon preached at St. Mary le Bow, before the Society for Reformation of Manners* (1709), pp. 22-23. For Withers' support of the reformation of manners see his name at the foot of EUL Laing MS III,394, pp. 415-420.

<sup>284</sup> *Reasons formerly Published*, pp. 10-11. The engravings were probably the much pirated and altered late Renaissance figure studies known as 'Aretino's Postures', for which see Donald Thomas, *A Long Time Burning* (New York, 1969) and David Foxon, *Libertine Literature in England 1660-1715* (New York, 1965), *passim*

could muster in 1715 was a reissue of Mayor Withers' 1708 order against play booths, but without the success of the original.<sup>285</sup>

By the time a curtailment of the popular excesses of Bartholomew Fair was achieved, the societies for reformation of manners had long since passed from the London scene. It should not be assumed that their chief motivation in attacking the Fair was a sanctimonious desire to deprive thousands of ordinary Londoners of their annual Smithfield amusements. On the contrary, the reformers' tenacity sprang from a firm belief that '*promoting good order and good manners ... by suppressing the contrary*' was the '*most direct and most effectual means to make a city or a people happy*'.<sup>286</sup> For them it was beyond dispute that the commonweal's welfare depended on the strength of its individual members.<sup>287</sup> This was as true of England as a whole as it was of the population of London. The reformers' attitude towards Bartholomew Fair reflected their concern for the maintenance of the bond between the sound manners of the individual and the health of the wider community; acting to suppress the Fair's immorality and profaneness was to them only a practical means of strengthening that bond.

### Homosexuals in the Metropolis

The taboo against homosexuality that coloured the attitudes of the reformers of manners had its origins in the religious nationalism of the ancient Hebrews. The taboo embodied the Jewish sense of distinctiveness from and moral superiority over neighbouring cults and thus became an integral part of their behavioural code. Christianity embodied this aspect in its general hostility to the naked body of either sex, and to the inferior position accorded to women due to their role in the '*fall of Adam*' and their ritual uncleanness during menstruation and pregnancy. The *Pauline Epistles* developed a full-blown argument that sexual relationships of any sort outside the confine of procreative heterosexual monogamy were unnatural and transgressions of divine purpose. This reached refinement in the European tradition with Thomas Aquinas who argued that the only natural, and therefore legal, sexual acts had the procreation of children as their objective. Even rape was preferable to same-sex relations because of its procreative potential.<sup>288</sup>

The idea that Christian orthodoxy and political loyalty are inseparable has its roots in the legal codifications of the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century. From this fusion arose the converse belief that treason and heresy, as the opposites of loyalty and orthodoxy, were similarly linked. Justinian's *Code* added sex to this identification by describing 'unnatural' sexual acts—male homosexuality in particular—as a threat to the political state and thus a form of treason since it violated orthodox religious

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<sup>285</sup> Rosenfeld, *Theatre of the London Fairs*, p. 2.

<sup>286</sup> *Reasons formerly Published*, p. 4.

<sup>287</sup> J. A. W. Gunn, *Politics and the Public Interest in the Seventeenth Century* (1969) elaborates on this theme.

<sup>288</sup> For Judaic and early Christian attitudes see John Lauritsen, *The Religious Roots of the Taboo on Homosexuality* (New York, 1974); for mediaeval developments see Arno Karlen, *Sexuality and Homosexuality* (1971) and C. A. Tripp, *The Homosexual Matrix* (New York, 1977).

belief. Reformers of manners hundreds of years later would have found little to disagree with in this view.<sup>289</sup> Despite its distinct common law tradition, England was strongly influenced by this conjunction of law, orthodoxy and sexual manners. The idea that '*non-purposive*' sex whether prostitution, adultery or same-sex, was a social threat has a venerable historical pedigree and was strengthened by the religious changes occurring in England during the Reformation of the sixteenth century. It was at this time that sodomy (the term 'homosexuality' was not coined until 1869 or common in English usage until the late nineteenth century) was transferred from ecclesiastical to civil jurisdiction. The Henrician statute of 1533 embodied religious belief in its decree of death by hanging for '*the detestable and abominable vice of buggery committed with mankind or beast*'. This Act (25 Hen. VIII, c. 6) was re-enacted in 1563 under Elizabeth and remained the legal basis for all homosexual prosecutions in England until 1885. It is important to realise that the prohibition was against a range of practices of a non-purposive sexual nature and not against a specified type of person. 'Homosexual' had no definition in English law and all sinful creatures were thought capable of 'homosexuality' in this sense.<sup>290</sup>

Christianity, declared the Restoration Chief Justice Matthew Hale in 1676, was '*a parcel of the laws of England*' and its reproach constituted '*subversion of the law*'.<sup>291</sup> By and large the law against *crimen inter Christianos non nominandum* ('that crime not fit to be spoken of amongst Christians') referred to male homosexuality in general and sodomy in particular.<sup>292</sup> In the climate dominated by foreign threat and domestic instability after 1688, the reformers of manners feared homosexual acts as not only direct challenges to Christian orthodoxy but as impediments to their objective of creating by law enforcement an outward social unity, moral discipline, and respect for religion deemed essential for England's survival and future prosperity. It is wholly understandable, therefore, that the movement for reformation of manners should direct some of its energies to the suppression of homosexuals in the metropolis.

Though one foreign observer assured his readers that Englishmen '*love the fair sex too well to fall into such an abomination*',<sup>293</sup> the reformers of manners doubted their countrymen's immunity to sexual deviation. Foreigners were even more suspect, especially Catholics, and much was made of the fact that the brother of the arch-enemy Louis XIV, the epitome of aggrandising arbitrary monarchy, modelled himself

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<sup>289</sup> F. E. Frenkel, 'Sex Crime and its Socio-Historical Background' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 25; 333-352, (1964); W. G. Cole, *Sex in Christianity and Psychoanalysis* (1966), *passim*.

<sup>290</sup> See Francois Lafitte, 'Homosexuality and the Law: The Wolfenden Report in historical perspective', *British Journal of Delinquency*, 9: 8-19, (1958) and Sir L. Radzinowitz, *History of English Criminal Law*, vol. 4; *Grappling for Control* (1968), pp. 329-331.

<sup>291</sup> Donald Thomas, *A Long Time Burning* (1969), p. 66 quoting Hale's judgment in the 1676 blasphemy trial of John Taylor, p 36.

<sup>292</sup> The ignoring of women probably stemmed from the contemporary physiological belief that all procreative power resided in male semen and that women had a purely receptive and passive sexual role. Thus women could not deny God's procreative aims in the same way as male same sex relations did; see this analysis in H. M. Ruitenbeek, *The Problem of Homosexuality in Modern Society* (New York, 1963).

<sup>293</sup> de Valbourg, *Memoirs and Observations*, p. 24.

on his blatantly homosexual ancestor Henri III. What was conveniently ignored, if even known, was that Louis himself was particularly concerned to use police methods to suppress not only homosexuality in Paris but also prostitution, blasphemy and Sabbath-breaking for reasons not unlike those of the reformers of manners themselves.<sup>294</sup>

It was established folk wisdom in England in the late seventeenth century that sodomy originated in infidel Turkey and spread into Europe with the papist Italians. Nothing was more natural in the post-1688 climate of opinion, therefore, than to identify it further with the English view of France's '*impoverished absolutism*' and the love of vice supposedly held by English Jacobites.<sup>295</sup> Homosexuality thus became part of the politico-moral propaganda battles of the post-1688 years, a fact to which the conduct of William of Orange and his close circle of foreign advisers and intimates gave an embarrassing twist.

William's personal aloofness and his imperious conduct of war and domestic affairs so frustrated and baffled some of his critics that speculation arose about the sexual proclivities of a man following such seemingly 'unnatural' courses in politics. Some poetical comments on state affairs, even prior to Queen Mary's death in 1694, alluded to homosexuality as the explanation for the otherwise inscrutable behaviour of this single-minded Dutchman.<sup>296</sup> Following the loss of his wife, William's increasing reliance on male favourites such as Portland, and that intimate's displacement by the young dandy Keppel (created Earl of Albemarle in 1697) begat rumours at home and abroad. It is small wonder then that a monarch whose self-centred life provided ample reasons for political controversy should also attract sexual scandalmongering, whatever his true sexual identity.<sup>297</sup>

The King himself was never one to trouble himself overmuch about what public tongues said about him, and William's sexuality is not itself an issue of much historical importance. What is noteworthy, however, is that some of his firmest supporters among the London reformers of manners felt moved to raise a hue and cry after homosexuals. The roots this lay in the legal and moral precepts of Christianity, but the proximate cause for their campaign against homosexuality was their desire to show that the embodiment of God's providential favours in William of

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<sup>294</sup> 38 Karlen, *Sexuality*, esp. chap. 8; see also P. F. Riley, 'Louis XIV: Watchdog of Parisian Morality' *The Historian*, 36: 19-33, (1973).

<sup>295</sup> See *The Character of a Jacobite* (1690) for the argument that vice and popery are natural allies and that Jacobitism attracted the most depraved elements in society. For the Turkish and Italian argument see the preface to the 1699 edition of *The Tryal and Condemnation of Mervyn Touchet Lord Audley, Earl of Castle-Haven, at Westminster on 5 April 1631*.

<sup>296</sup> W. J. Cameron ed., *Poems on Affairs of State: Augustan Satirical Verse, 1660-1714*; vol. 5: 1688-1697 reprints some of these accusations (New Haven, 1971). Earl Miner's review of this volume (*Scribnerian*, 5, no. 1, 1972, p. 37) notes that from 1688 to 1694 'William III is harried by his English subjects so baffled over what he meant that they lamely charged him with homosexuality to signify what was thought politically unnatural'.

<sup>297</sup> H. and B. van der Zee, *William and Mary* (1973), pp. 408-424.

Orange and the Revolution in general was above any aberration from orthodox sexual manners.<sup>298</sup>

The 1696 production at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, of Sir John Vanbrugh's salacious comedy *The Relapse; or Virtue in Danger* stirred up gossip about homosexuality in Court circles. Vanbrugh was then much in vogue and had no time for 'those pretenders to good manners' who strained every muscle to 'extract a bawdy jest from an ejaculation...'.<sup>299</sup> But the reformers certainly had time for him since they believed his risqué wit and flouting of conventional values made him 'that very man who debauched [the stage] to a degree beyond the looseness of all former times'.<sup>300</sup> Rumours stemming from *The Relapse* spread through London and across the Channel where William's enemies at St. Germain were eager to embroider any scandal against the King. Even one of William's few admirers at the French Court, Charlotte-Elizabeth the Duchess of Orleans, repeated one tale to the effect that 'the King is said to have been in love with Albemarle as with a woman, and they say he used to kiss his hands before all the Court'.<sup>301</sup> In the context of the later 1690s, such insinuations could only damage William's international standing and his political prowess at home. Campaigning against homosexuality, therefore, would be one way to prove to the wider world that England, her ruler and his revolution were not unnatural in the sight of God or mankind.

The reformers got their chance to make a public demonstration of their hatred of homosexuality in 1698 when they engineered the prosecution of Captain Edward Rigby, commander of the warship *HMS Dragon*, for attempted sodomy with a young servant. The servant's master happened to be a friend of Rev. Thomas Bray, and this gave that prominent reformer of manners a ready-made opportunity to make a public display against the sin of religious and political deviance. The reformers' exploitation of the Rigby affair only began after a naval court martial had acquitted the man of the charge.<sup>302</sup> The Rev. Thomas Bray was chiefly responsible for promoting the second prosecution at the Old Bailey and a note in his MS records that it 'cost him much trouble and charge, and exposed him to no small danger'.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> See also *A Satyr upon King William: being the Secret History of his Reign* (3rd. ed., 1703), pp. xiii-ix, which stressed that William was 'as free from that vice, as Lot when he left Sodom'.

<sup>299</sup> Sir John Vanbrugh, *The Relapse; or Virtue in Danger* (1697), preface lines 22-24.

<sup>300</sup> *A Letter from several Members of the Society for Reformation of Manners, to ... Thomas [Tenison] ... Lord Arch-Bishop of Canterbury* (circa. 1704), p.1 Reformers of manners also complained of Vanburgh's *Provoked Wife* and *False Friend*. For their chief arguments against the stage as an encouragement to moral deviance see the explanatory notes to the first volume of E. N. Hooker ed., *The Critical Works of John Dennis* (Baltimore, 1939); and Lambeth MS 953.13 for theatrical impudence in staging *The Tempest* after the Great Storm of 1703.

<sup>301</sup> van der Zee, *William and Mary*, p. 423, citing G. S. Stevenson ed., *The Letters of Madame* (1925), I. pp. 156-157.

<sup>302</sup> BL Loan 29/206, fol. 322 (Josiah Burchett, Secretary to the Admiralty, to Navy Board, 3 December 1698). *HMS Dragon* was a fourth-rater of 470 tonnes and 46 guns with a crew of 220 officers and men.

<sup>303</sup> Bray MSS, 'A True Narrative or Memorial Representing the Rise and Progress and Issue of Dr. Bray's Missionary Undertaking', fol. 44.



The Rigby prosecution afforded the reformers of manners the opportunity they wanted to make public their wish to put 'a great check to an abomination, not more horrible in itself, than on this account also, that it was then grown so open and impudent'.<sup>304</sup> The attempted sodomy for which Capt. Rigby was indicted at the Old Bailey on 4 December 1698 occurred a month earlier after Rigby had met one William Minton in St. James's Park where both men were watching the fireworks on the night of 5 November.<sup>305</sup> A second meeting was arranged for the following Sunday at *The George* public house in the Mall, but in the interim young Minton confessed the whole story of Capt. Rigby's advances towards him to his master, a sober citizen named Charles Coates. Mr. Coates informed the Rev. Bray and together they accompanied the young man to see Justice Thomas Railton, a magistrate noted for his support of the reformation campaign. With the JP a plan was devised to trap and arrest Rigby at *The George* rendezvous. Officers would hide in an adjoining room and when Minton shouted the code word 'Westminster' they would burst in and arrest the sea captain. This entrapment tactic worked and Rigby was literally caught with his breeches around his ankles. He swore liberally against the arresting officers, so the reformers also charged Rigby with blasphemy as well as attempted sodomy when he appeared before Sir Henry Dutton Colt.

In court Capt. Rigby refused to plead to any charges, but the bench overturned his demurrer, found the indictment true, and gave judgment against him without admitting into evidence any of the defence's affidavits of good character. King's counsel demanded an '*exemplary judgment*', and the bench obliged with a remarkable sentence. The Captain was to stand in the pillory between 11 in the morning and 1 in the afternoon on three separate occasions; first near *The George* tavern in the Mall, then at Charing Cross, and finally at Temple Bar. Obviously the intent was to obtain maximum public exposure for the sentence in the hope it would have optimum didactic effect. A fine of £1000 was also imposed and following its payment a prison sentence of one year. Before discharge from confinement, Rigby was further required to provide sureties for his good behaviour for the next seven years. There was no capital sentence because the charge was only attempted sodomy which was not then a felony.<sup>306</sup> The Rigby trial quickly became the talk of London, even figuring in dispatches sent to Ambassador Williamson at The Hague during December 1698.<sup>307</sup> Robert Harley noted in a letter home on 20 December that Rigby stood in the pillory for the first time that day.<sup>308</sup> Narcissus Luttrell also

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<sup>304</sup> Ibid., fol. 45.

<sup>305</sup> The story is given in *A Compleat Collection of Remarkable Tryals of the Most Notorious Malefactors at the Sessions House in the Old Bailey for Forty Years Past* (1718), I, pp 235-242.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> CSPD (John Ellis to Ambassador Williamson) 13 and 20 December 1698.

<sup>308</sup> BL Loan 29/189, fol. 47 (Robert Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 20 December 1698). Robert's reforming younger brother Edward had already informed their father that '*Rigby, a captain of a man of war, is accused of most horrid blasphemy and sodomy*', *ibid.*, fol. 41 (19 November 1698).

thought the event worthy of recording, together with details of the Captain's crime and sentence.<sup>309</sup>

According to Defoe's *Review*, a paper defending Rigby circulated in the town following the trial, and this may in part explain the remarkably light treatment he received during his public penances.<sup>310</sup> Pillory punishments were often free-for-alls with constables turning a blind eye while the crowd hurled rotting vegetables, stones and excrement from the streets at the unfortunate prisoner. A scandalous figure in the pillory such as Capt. Rigby should have been an irresistible target for the crowd who were not noted for their toleration of homosexuals. But when Rigby mounted the pillory platform in the Mall on 20 December he wore the clothes of a town beau and was required only to stand beside the device without putting his head inside it. Even more remarkable was the fact that he was '*so attended with constables and beadles that nobody could throw anything at him*'.<sup>311</sup> Perhaps powerful friends intervened on the Captain's behalf to ensure this, but the evidence is not forthcoming for this explanation. Somewhat more in keeping with expectations, however, was the scramble for Rigby's £1000 fine, which was promptly paid, and shows that either the naval officer or his friends were men of not inconsiderable means. By the end of 1698 the Sheriffs of London and Middlesex were locked in dispute over their respective rights to this sum.<sup>312</sup>

The reformers of manners clearly wished the Rigby trial and pillory penance to be used for public instruction. As a warning to others who might be tempted as Rigby was, they published *The Sodomite's Shame and Doom* telling homosexuals that '*of all the herd of unclean, you are the most noisesome and scandalous; insomuch that it does violence to Christian modesty, yea, to common decency, to make mention of your odious and monstrous sin*'. But mention it they did to drive home their point that '*your base sin ... will so waste and destroy all that is virtuous and comely in you, that other impieties will be apt to be advanced to an unlawful height by it: as Rigby's prodigious lusts led him to unparalleled blasphemies*'. The reformers provided a catalogue of corrective measures leading to true reformation for homosexuals, among which the chief was

*to refrain from such persons and places as have led you to former defilement. Do this, or you do nothing. For whatever the pretence may be, the same way tends still to the same end. And for this reason, you must discard all vain books, such as play-books, romances, and novels and all unserious and debauched company, because these tend to create an unchristian levity in your mind, and are apt to fire you with such a crowd of idle and vain speculations as will expose you to sundry temptations and carnal impressions.*

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<sup>309</sup> Luttrell, *Brief Relation* IV, pp. 461, 462, 464.

<sup>310</sup> *The Review* IV, no. 125 (27 November 1707).

<sup>311</sup> CSPD (Ellis to Williamson) 20 December 1698.

<sup>312</sup> CSPD (Petition of Sheriffs of London and Middlesex) 26 December 1698.

In case voluntary self-repression failed, the reformers of manners threatened public exposure and punishment, since *'to your shame, many of your names and places of abode are known, and though they are at present concealed, to see whether you will reform, some way may be taken to publish you to the world.... Your scandalous haunts are also known and will (we hope) be visited by such as may bring your crimes to just punishment'*.<sup>313</sup>

Captain Edward Rigby went to France after discharging his sentence and did not figure in English affairs again until 1705. That summer Josiah Burchett at the Admiralty sent Secretary of State Robert Harley correspondence reputedly sent to Rigby by an English spy but intercepted by Admiral Sir George Byng. The letters criticised British attempts to manipulate the maritime affairs of neutral nations to suit England's war strategy. Given the existing conflict with France, such messages, especially involving such a scandalous figure as Rigby, were tantamount to treason.<sup>314</sup> Apparently the societies for reformation of manners did not learn of this episode, but if they had it would have only confirmed their belief that homosexuality and political disloyalty were synonymous.

There were many voices raised following the Rigby trial. The anonymous author of *The Woman's Complaint to Venus* (1698) urged

*Make Rigby recant,  
And the soldiers henceforth do  
their duty.*<sup>315</sup>

The double entendre was no doubt intentional, but there was no mistaking the meaning of Lord Mayor Child's complaint to his Aldermen that *'the general corruption and depravation [sic] of manners within this City ... instead of being amended and reformed ... seems rather to prevail and increase, and daily manifests itself in the grossest and boldest acts of debauchery and licentiousness'*.<sup>316</sup> An enterprising London publisher linked the Rigby scandal with a reissue of the proceedings earlier in the century against the Earl of Castlehaven, who was beheaded for abetting the rape of his countess, the debauching of his daughter and buggery with his servants. The preface to the 1699 edition of Castlehaven's trial sums up common views in its lament that in contemporary England *'where the purest religion is professed, and where vice and immorality are punished by severe laws ... the most scandalous, inhuman, unnatural and beastly offences still stalk about at noon day'*. The author singled out *'that monster Rigby and other notorious sodomites'* for condemnation since their crime sank a man *'below the basest epithet [and] is so foul it admits of no*

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<sup>313</sup> *The Sodomites Shame and Doom, Laid before them with great Grief and Compassion by a Minister of the Church of England* (circa. 1699), pp. 1-3, *passim*.

<sup>314</sup> BL Loan 29/209, fols. 151-158. For the threat that homosexuality was felt to pose to England's armed forces see A. N. Gilbert, 'Buggery and the British Navy, 1700-1861', *Journal of Social History*, 10, no. 1 (1976).

<sup>315</sup> Harold Love ed., *The Penguin Book of Restoration Verse* (1968), p. 168.

<sup>316</sup> Guildhall Broadside 5.15 (1 March 1699).

aggravation, and cannot be expressed in its horror except by the doleful shrieks and groans of the damned'.<sup>317</sup>

Homosexuality was not only damnable but dangerous, since the same sins 'as now rage among our English debauchees' would bring England to the same fate as the Cities of the Plain unless 'pride, luxury, and irreligion... the infernal parents of sodomy' were reduced by a reformation of manners from their overweening position. These vices bred effeminacy in Englishmen and drove out manly traits of virtue, wisdom and courage as surely as bad money drove out good coin from circulation.<sup>318</sup> The argument that the manners of the fop led to deterioration of body and moral fibre subversive to the conventions of religious and sexual orthodoxy would have caused sober reformers of manners to nod in agreement.<sup>319</sup>

After William III's death in March 1702, the reformers maintained their active hostility to homosexuality during Queen Anne's reign. The 11th edition of their *Account of the Progress of the Reformation of Manners in England, Scotland and Ireland* (1703) proudly announced that 'since the trial and punishment of the sea captain [Edward Rigby]... three persons, by the diligence of a society for reformation, were found guilty of sodomy before the Lord Chief Justice Holt the last Lent Assizes at Maidstone, and were accordingly executed'.<sup>320</sup>

If reformers of manners felt pride in this achievement and others like it, some observers questioned the deterrent effect of trials and punishments. One pamphleteer in 1705 claimed that 'sodomy too, that abominable and beastly sin ... is much in vogue; (and nothing becomes more common) it out-rivals whoring, appears as barefaced as strutting strumpets, and nightly haunts our streets'.<sup>321</sup> In October 1707 half a dozen men were indicted at Guildhall for 'wicked crimes of unnatural lewdness with their own sex', and two of the younger defendants claimed they had 'too much complied with the lascivious humour of some wealthy men in the City' and were thus 'more easily drawn away to such lewdness for the lucre of money'.<sup>322</sup>

This exposé of homosexual prostitution was sensational and quickly appeared as a penny pamphlet which some reformation sympathisers distributed as far afield as Oxford.<sup>323</sup> Another edition of the 1631 Castlehaven trial appeared on its heels and

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<sup>317</sup> *Trial and Condemnation of ... Earl of Castlehaven* (1699), unpaginated preface, *passim*. For the significance of this 1631 trial see Caroline Bingham, 'Seventeenth Century Attitudes towards Deviant Sex', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* I: pp 447-72, (1971).

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>319</sup> See the theme elaborated in Josiah Woodward's tract *The Young Man's Monitor, shewing the great Happiness of early Piety and the dreadful consequence of Indulging youthful Lust* (1706); and Benjamin Grosvenor, *The Preservative of Virtuous Youth* (1714).

<sup>320</sup> *Account of the Progress*, p. 27.

<sup>321</sup> *The Invisible Observer, or the Town Discovered* (1705) unpaginated preface.

<sup>322</sup> *An Account of the Trial, Examination And Conviction of Several Notorious Persons called Sodomites at Guildhall* (1707), broadside.

<sup>323</sup> C. E. Doble ed., *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne* (Oxford, 1885) II, p. 74.

the reforming societies themselves pointed to their successes against '*gangs of detestable Sodomites*' in London in their *Accounts* for 1707 to 1709.<sup>324</sup>

Clearly the reforming societies remained anxious about the extent and effect of homosexuality for years after the death of William of Orange whom their initial campaign was in part designed to defend. In late 1708 that pillar of the reformation movement the Rev. Thomas Bray, by now very involved as well with the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the establishment of charity schools, publicly confirmed that homosexuality flourished even though some '*horrible instances among us*' had '*to the eternal honour of our reformers*' been '*brought to condign punishment*'. The great efforts of the societies for reformation of manners, Bray claimed, had visibly lessened prostitution, swearing and cursing in London's streets, and public profanations of the Lord's Day. But this was no reason for complacency, for '*a far more abominable host*' approached: '*the Sodomites are invading our land*'.<sup>325</sup> There is evidence for believing Bray's claim that homosexual practices were becoming more prominent in London, at least in the development of an identifiable sub-culture perhaps as a response to the repressive efforts of the moral reformers themselves.<sup>326</sup>

In condemning homosexuality in Queen Anne's reign, Bray and the reformers of manners were being consistent with their earlier providential interpretation of the link between the nation's sound manners and its continued enjoyment of divine favours. If the campaign slackened, then '*God will pour down a deluge of wrath upon us, so as totally to devour both us and ours, and that will cost us our all*'. Seldom had a Biblical Levite damned the '*way of the Canaanite*' with more ferocity than Bray did homosexuality in this sermon. Sodomy, he declared, was worse than all other forms of uncleanness and God had singled it out for special condemnation.<sup>327</sup> This obsession with the persistence of homosexuality in London indicated that the reformers of manners never felt that they achieved more than transient victories against it.<sup>328</sup> Their successes were against individual homosexuals such as Capt. Edward Rigby and the men executed at Maidstone in 1703. Those who did not feel the punitive effect of law enforcement at first hand were probably little affected by it.

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<sup>324</sup> Ibid., p 75.

<sup>325</sup> Thomas Bray, *For God, or for Satan: being a Sermon preached at St. Mary le Bow, before the Society for Reformation of Manners*, 21 December 1708 (1709), pp. 20-30.

<sup>326</sup> Edward Ward reported on the largely transvestite 'Mollies Club' in *The Secret History of London Clubs* (1709).

<sup>327</sup> Bray, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>328</sup> A new campaign began in the mid-1720s led by Bishop Edmund Gibson and Archbishop William Wake. See Norman Sykes, *Edmund Gibson* (1926), p. 196 and Wake Papers, vol 27, fols. 185-188.

## CHAPTER SIX:

### **'THEN STOOD UP PHINEHAS AND EXECUTED JUDGEMENT': VIEWS ON MAGISTRACY, THE COMMUNITY AND THE FAMILY IN REFORMATION OF MANNERS SERMONS**

This chapter explores the theoretical justifications for the reformers' practical campaign of law enforcement. It emphasises their abiding image of the righteous magistrate protecting the community's interests against vice and dissolution. The application of righteousness in the setting of a Christian community composed of properly regulated religious households was the most important normative principle running through these sermons. Exploring them illustrates the 'official' views of the gentlemen leading the reformation movement and places their arguments in the context of providentialism and the realities of foreign war and domestic tension.

Sixty or more sermons for reformation of manners were preached between 1697 and 1715 in London by Anglican clergy at St. Mary le Bow and by Dissenters at Salters Hall.<sup>329</sup> The audiences were mixed Churchmen and Nonconformists on each occasion, thus giving visible expression to the reformers' contention that the struggle against vice should supersede any confessional divisions amongst Christians.

These London sermons (there were others preached less regularly in some provincial towns) were given at the invitation of the gentlemen composing the First Society for Reformation of Manners. The pulpit offerings of the preachers were then published with the imprimatur of the capital's many reforming societies. This self-selection disposes of any methodological problem relating to the representative nature of this series of sermons.

These published works were meant to stand as printed apologies for reformation endeavours and exhortations to many more people than their immediate hearers. The movement always needed physical and financial supporters and these exhortations were also designed to bring new recruits into the societies themselves. They purveyed the 'party line' of the reformers by enunciating the unshakeable theological justifications for tactics of social intervention to correct vice and profaneness. As many divines admitted in their sermons, this function allowed little scope for variation and many efforts were unashamedly repetitive and derivative from earlier sermons in the series. But ingenuity and sermonical fireworks were never meant to characterise this genre of commissioned preaching. The audience was more concerned with hearing the basic truths of the movement's objectives restated in sombre surroundings than with the rhetorical skills of the preachers. Because of this, the medium most often used was as conservative as the message itself. Elevated prose was seldom employed, and in many respects these sermons

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<sup>329</sup> See the chronological list following this chapter. The hall of the Worshipful Company of Salters livery company in St Swithen's Lane was around this time and into the 18<sup>th</sup> century a noted meeting place for nonconformists.

resemble those preached during wartime in Elizabeth's reign since they singled out the sins of swearing, cursing, profanation of the Sabbath, sexual licence, and gaming as contributory to the nation's military weakness. Also like their Elizabethan predecessors, many preachers identified popery not as the chief cause of England's dangers, but as the most threatening symbol of the nation's own sinfulness.<sup>330</sup>

Reformation preachers and their hearers and readers were strongly influenced by two potent traditions: the idea of Providence working in the fall of the Stuarts and the setting up of William and Mary; and the notion of England as God's chosen nation and heir to the 'special relationship' enjoyed by biblical Israel. The providential theme has already been mentioned and will be explored in more depth in the conclusion to this study dealing with the ideological significance of the reformation movement. The second belief, in England's elect status before God, had a complex origin sometime during the course of the sixteenth century, but the crucible giving it lasting historical significance was the period of Catholic reaction accompanying the rule of Mary Tudor. At that time popular works such as Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, better known as the *Book of Martyrs*, combined with a traditional English xenophobia to forge English Protestantism into a patriotic bulwark against foreign and Catholic enemies.<sup>331</sup>

In the upheavals of the sixteenth century, Catholic power at home and abroad became identified with Antichrist. Though the Laudian Anglican Church abandoned this literal belief by the mid-Stuart era, the burgeoning sects adopted it and used it to attack episcopacy and the monarchy themselves.<sup>332</sup> After the disruptions of the Civil War and Interregnum, only a few scattered republicans or religious enthusiasts would have wished to revive the 'eschatological brinkmanship' of earlier decades, and with the Restoration itself the fire went out of more bellies than just sectarian ones. But not all the tradition of 'godly rule' was extinguished.<sup>333</sup> Shorn of its wilder trappings of the literal rule of God following some apocalyptic event and the destruction of Antichrist, 'godly rule' could embody the application of righteousness within the community itself. This version of the tradition was inherited by the leading lay reformers of manners, all of whom had lived through the Civil War and Cromwellian periods. Coupled with the belief in England's succession to ancient Israel, a belief in the application of righteousness by godly magistrates was a powerful spur to social action by the reformers. Their understanding of the need for 'godly rule' was intimately linked to their perceived need to preserve stability and harmony in a society chiefly organised by the principle of subordination, whether of

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<sup>330</sup> Paul A. Jorgensen, 'Elizabethan Religious Literature in Time of War', *HLQ*, 37 (1973-74) pp. 1-17.

<sup>331</sup> This complex subject is discussed in William Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation* (1963) and D. M. Loades, *The Oxford Martyrs* (1970), chapter 3. See also Carol Z. Weiner, 'The Beleaguered Isle: A Study of Elizabethan and Early Jacobean Anti-Catholicism' *Past and Present*, No. 51 (1971), pp. 27-62; and Robin Clifton, 'The Popular Fear of Catholics During the English Revolution' *Past and Present*, No. 52 (1971), pp. 23-55.

<sup>332</sup> Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth Century England* (1971), *passim*.

<sup>333</sup> William Lamont, *Godly Rule: Politics and Religion 1603-1660* (1969), p. 25. See also John Miller, *Popery and Politics in England, 1660-1688* (Cambridge, 1973).

servant to master, child to parent, or subject to monarch.<sup>334</sup> Antichrist as a flesh and blood figure disappeared for all practical purposes after 1660, but as preachers never tired of reminding their congregations, sin had not disappeared from the hearts of Englishmen and the collective national guilt this caused could lead to divine punishments without a reformation in the nation's manners. As John Evelyn expressed this fear in May 1690, '*all our threatening calamity proceeded from men's vices, and they, for want of stable, Christian and moral principles*'.<sup>335</sup>

The most obvious manifestation of Evelyn's 'threatening calamity' was poised just across the Channel while a war of unprecedented intensity and expense raged for twenty of the twenty-five years after 1688. This would have been cause for worry enough had King William been able to sustain the broad-based popularity he enjoyed in the first heady months following his arrival. But in marked contrast to Queen Mary, William's personal style of government and his deep involvement with Continental affairs and advisers antagonised large portions of the insular political nation.<sup>336</sup> The King's personal safety was another cause for anxiety, and the most serious plot against his life was discovered in 1696 only months before the reformation sermons began to be preached in London. Had this attempt succeeded, it would have signalled a French invasion and Jacobite uprising to restore James II.

Such ever-present dangers, coupled with William and Mary's continuing childlessness and the precarious health of William, his sister-in-law Princess Anne and her only son, made the 1690s a worrisome decade. Where was stability to be found and how could England's unique inheritance and destiny be best protected? To the founders of the reformation of manners campaign the obvious answer was in the visible enforcement of the laws of England, since these embodied both the genius of the nation and the will of God. From here it was a short step to the advocacy of righteous magistrates as the agents best suited for exercising authority in the community in the name of God and for the benefit of all members of the commonweal.

To the late seventeenth century mind, the laws of England were vehicles for both divine and temporal authority. As Sir Matthew Hale phrased it, Christianity was '*a parcel of the laws of England and therefore to reproach the Christian religion is to speak in subversion of the law*'<sup>337</sup> For the Protestant patriots leading the societies for reformation of manners, a campaign for visible law enforcement brought together all the strands of belief mentioned above. Social intervention to correct sin was not in their view innovative, but rather the logical conclusion of prescriptive laws whose

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<sup>334</sup> For the literature see Chilton Powell, *English Domestic Relations, 1487-1653* (New York, 1917), and Daniel Defoe, *The Family Instructor* (2 vols., 1715-1718), *passim*. The bedrock of this thinking was Richard Allestree's *Whole Duty of Man* (1658) which had at least twenty-five editions by 1720.

<sup>335</sup> E. S. de Beer ed., *The Diary of John Evelyn* (Oxford 1955 onwards), V, May 1690.

<sup>336</sup> J. H. Plumb, *The Growth of Political Stability in England, 1675-1725* (1967), esp. chaps. 3-5; see also E.L. Ellis, 'William III and the Politicians' in Holmes, ed., *Britain after the Glorious Revolution* (1969), pp. 115-134.

<sup>337</sup> Thomas, *A Long Time Burning* (1969), p. 66.



objective of a stable, harmonious and pious community on earth mirrored God's plan for human society. Just as through religion sinful men were led out of their lapsed state to achieve personal salvation, so through the execution of England's good laws which had been inspired by the tenets of Christianity, the nation itself could be guided away from national sinfulness caused by unchecked vice and profaneness and towards national salvation ensuring the continuation of God's providential mercies. As the nonconformist preacher Vincent Alsop put this in his reformation sermon, *'the great end of human laws for reformation of offences against the moral law, is to apply the law of God and set it home by punishment upon the conscience'*.<sup>338</sup>

One of the greatest dangers to success in law enforcement lay in hypocrisy, which the reformers reasoned would give great offence to God and call down divine punishments. Unfortunately for their desired public reformation, the prevailing system of authority resting on justices of the peace and parish officers was scarcely noted for impartiality or efficiency. Thus a continuing theme in reformation sermons was how to ensure righteous magistracy, since anything less would simply make England more deserving of chastisement at the hands of Louis XIV. As Isaac Watts warned, *'God can let France in upon us like a flood, and Louis XIV will be as zealous a servant of the Lord in such work, as Nebuchadnezzar was when God sent him to punish Jerusalem and the nations. When the French dragoons insult us, and our necks are put under the feet of our enemies, we may then perhaps remember and repent that we did not arise for the Lord against evil doers and tread down the enemies of His holiness'*.<sup>339</sup>

One reason for the reformation preachers' concern for the quality of justice dispensed particularly in London stemmed from the prevalent tendency to view offices as freeholds and sources of profit, a situation more calculated to produce 'trading justices' akin to Fielding's Justice Thrasher in *Amelia* than a righteous magistrate inspired by the models of the Old Testament.<sup>340</sup> Crimes where seemingly only God was the 'victim' such as swearing, cursing or profanations of the Sabbath would tend to be ignored or connived at, while a 'justice for sale' attitude would only encourage perjury, extortion and vexatious suits in an already litigious age. Whatever the realities of contemporary law enforcement, there was too much at stake for the reformers of manners to abandon their advocacy of righteous magistracy. What their preachers wished to see were more magistrates who realised the full implications of their sacred oaths of office and executed their duties to please God and safeguard the community. It is not surprising that the Old Testament provided the chief models for such ideal figures. There could be found the stories of

<sup>338</sup> Vincent Alsop, *A Sermon Preached to the Societies for Reformation of Manners at Salters Hall* (1698), pp. 14-15. These sermon titles are virtually standardised and to save space in footnotes only the preacher's name, the place (i. e. Bow Church or Salters Hall), year of publication and page reference will be given.

<sup>339</sup> Isaac Watts, *Salters Hall*, (1707), p. 35.

<sup>340</sup> M. Dorothy George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (rev. ed., 1965), p. 19ff; see also Plumb, *Political Stability*, p. 34ff

Phinehas and Samuel, among others, who were personifications of the godly magistrate. A short exegesis on the passage mentioning Phinehas which was most often cited by reformation preachers is necessary here to introduce the following arguments in this chapter. As given in *Psalms* 106 verses 30-31 the text reads:

*Then stood up Phinehas and executed judgment, and so the plague was stayed. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.*

Here the psalmist refers to a story originally given in *Numbers* chapter 25 describing Phinehas, a priest and magistrate who was zealous for the honour of God and the laws of Israel. The specific act mentioned concerns the fraternisation of the Israelite men with the women of Midian who, being foreign, were also 'unclean'. As a punishment for this sin God sent a plague killing thousands of Israelites and this judgment brought the more sober part of the nation to a repentance of its sins. But during the time of humiliation and atonement that followed, one Zimri, a man of princely rank among the Israelites, consorted publicly with his Midianite mistress on the assumption that his superior rank excused him from the duties of his countrymen to beg God's forgiveness. Phinehas the righteous magistrate saw this outrage and knew that such a powerful example of vice and hypocrisy would tend to corrupt ordinary people as well as offend God. Acting therefore from a desire to protect Israel and honour God, Phinehas rose from his own prayers and impaled the scandalous Zimri and his mistress with his javelin in the midst of what the reformation preachers usually termed their 'abominable lewdness'. Justice was seen to be done and hypocrisy was punished. God accepted Israel's public repentance and the plague departed to allow the nation's enjoyment of its favoured position in God's eyes.

This story of national danger, followed by repentance and deliverance due to Phinehas' act of obedience to God and the laws of Israel was ready-made for the reformation preachers. Public impieties could best be removed by visible enforcement of the laws against vice and profaneness. If led by righteous magistrates, this would be proof to God of England's sincere desire to reform its manners. From such beginnings, it was argued, great things would follow until the world would see in England as among the ancient Hebrews, '*Jerusalem in prosperity, and peace upon Israel*'.<sup>341</sup> Righteousness was a 'social cement' which could bind together the nation's honour of God with its physical safety. As the Anglican preacher Lilly Butler viewed it, righteousness '*endears men to God, unites them amongst themselves, banishes those vices to which public mischiefs and grievances are owing, and makes every man a hearty friend to his neighbour and the common good*'.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Lilly Butler, Bow Church (1697), p. 36.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

As the dissenting minister Samuel Palmer viewed the purpose of magistracy, *'the end and purpose of government is to encourage virtue, and reward it; and to punish vice, and destroy it; that men may be happy and secure in the regular enjoyment of the blessings of God'*.<sup>343</sup> It followed, then, that the general good of the community as well as the welfare of individual souls demanded that magistrates bear the sword of righteousness. Human laws and divine precepts could not be separated and to fail to identify them was positively pernicious according to Vincent Alsop. Preaching at the time of the passage of the Blasphemy Bill in 1698, he argued, *'that which renders debauchery incorrigible, is to punish it merely as a violation of a human law... If we wave the divine authority in the preceptive part, and conceal the divine sanction in the commendatory part, the offender has no more to contend with than the authority of man, and what punishments he can devise and inflict'*.<sup>344</sup>

The reformers of manners and their preachers had no time for the divisions separating England's Protestants, even though this often led to the charge that they sought to shackle the Established Church to a revival of the excesses of the Puritan era. Their view, however, was that doctrinal differences should melt away in the common agreement amongst all Christians that *'piety, and virtue and the fear of God... are our religion more than any particular opinions'*.<sup>345</sup> Reformation preachers continually urged closer cooperation between Protestants of whatever hue and hoped that the joint undertaking of the reformation movement would stimulate a true Comprehension. There could be no more comprehensive interest than the service of God and the nation, and in this light Cromwell's former chaplain, John Howe, argued that *'to differ about a ceremony or two, or a set of words, is but a trifle, compared with being agreed in absolute devotedness to God, and Christ, in a design as far as in them lies, of doing good to all...'*.<sup>346</sup> As William's reign progressed, such ecumenical sentiment encountered more strident opposition, as Sacheverell's outbursts were to prove. Nevertheless, reformation preachers such as the dissenter Timothy Rogers still argued in the inhospitable days of 1700 that reformers were not trying to confuse Christianity. They were *'not building a Babel, but an Ark, for our mutual defence and preservation. Here the Church and Meetings, the Gown and Cloak, are at no war, for sin is our common enemy'*.<sup>347</sup> The mounting High Church hysteria over the growth of Dissent effectively sabotaged such lofty ideals, and this is discussed more fully in the following chapter.

As one might expect, the reformation preachers espoused a literal struggle between God and the Devil in which no neutrality was allowed, as Daniel Williams emphasised by taking his sermon text from *Matthew 12: 30 'He that is not with me is*

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<sup>343</sup> Samuel Palmer, *Salters Hall*, (1706), p. 25.

<sup>344</sup> Vincent Alsop, *Salters Hall* (1698) pp. 14-15.

<sup>345</sup> Richard Willis, *Bow Church* (1704), pp. 18-19.

<sup>346</sup> John Howe, *Salters Hall*, (1698), p. 48.

<sup>347</sup> Timothy Rogers, *Salters Hall* (1700), p. 9.

against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad'.<sup>348</sup> When elucidating the Devil's wiles upon this cosmic stage, a favourite tactic was to single out for attack popery as a symptom of England's sinfulness and a threat to a nation whose moral senses were dulled by licentiousness. This argument was a frequent companion to the interpretation of Louis XIV as God's 'avenging angel' waiting to do his worst should England remain unrepentant. As Daniel Burgess argued, men hardened by vice and profaneness had scant concern for liberty so long as their lusts were gratified. A nation tainted with immorality, therefore, was fit only for '*the extremest [sic] servilities*' which would reduce its citizens to '*such saddle-backed animals as France glorieth in.....*'.<sup>349</sup> Was there in these sermons a hint of a Catholic conspiracy at work in the spread of vice and irreligion in England? Certainly some preachers claimed this, as William Tong did in seeing '*a most pernicious design at the bottom of it, formed and fomented by Rome and France, to prepare the way for popery and tyranny....*'<sup>350</sup> One of Tong's Anglican successors in the reformation pulpits, William Bisset, put this message in more colourful language when he warned that '*there are many amongst us, who would sell their Prince, their country, their church, their souls.. . to bring [France's] iron yoke upon our necks; if it were but to be no more plagued with reformation*'. Such dupes, continued the preacher, sought only self-gratification, for with a French victory '*they knew claret will be cheap, French whores will abound (which will sink the price) and [Louis XIV] will give them leave to be as wicked as they please (which is all they want) so they but acknowledge his will for supreme, and fall down and worship the golden image which he has set up...*'<sup>351</sup>

Whatever their persuasion, these preachers saw it as an axiom that religious discipline underlay moral rectitude and good manners. Without religious discipline, there could be no sense of shame and personal realisation of sin which, along with corporal punishments decreed by the laws, should act as checks on mankind's lusts. Without the clear moral teachings of England's reformed religion, men could be deluded by casuistry into accepting popery, since the Catholic practice of indulgences for removal of venial sins showed that it was not a true religion at all but a man-made device for reducing men to servility and then holding them there through superstition and gratification of their baser desires. As Tong concluded his lurid pulpit warning on the dangers of popery, '*those that are slaves to their lusts, will readily stoop to any other burden*'.<sup>352</sup> This was a bold assertion and not all preachers made their condemnations in such terms, but parallel sentiments can be found in almost all of the reformation sermons. Though all of the preachers mentioned the link between uncorrected vice and social disharmony, Dissenters tended to lay special emphasis on this taking the form of popery at times when

<sup>348</sup> Daniel Williams, *Salters Hall* (1698). Williams was convinced (p. 5) that '*there is in this world so fixed a war between these two kingdoms, that one grows upon the other's ruins*'.

<sup>349</sup> Daniel Burgess, *Salters Hall* (1697), p. 77.

<sup>350</sup> William Tong, *Salters Hall* (1703), p. 24.

<sup>351</sup> William Bisset, *Bow Church* (1704), p. 55. On this theme see also Benjamin Gravener, *Salters Hall* (1705), p. 21; John Billingsley, *Salters Hall* (1706), p. 18; and Matthew Henry, *Salters Hall* (1712), p. 13.

<sup>352</sup> Tong, *Ibid.*

England's foreign entanglements looked bleak. England needed righteous magistrates, said Thomas Cotton, during the throes of the struggle over the Spanish Succession, in order to show '*our enemies abroad*' that they could not hope to find '*any more persons so prepared by debaucheries*' who could be subverted and so '*betray us to those who would bring popery and slavery upon us*'. The discipline enforced by a righteous magistrate, continued the preacher, was the best guarantee of '*our religious and civil liberties and properties*' and '*the sure inheritance of our posterity after us*'.<sup>353</sup>

There is clearly a materialistic concern in Cotton's argument that discipline promotes the liberty necessary to prosperity while moral laxity leads to arbitrariness in government and poverty in the people. This argument can be found in other sermons as well. In the first months of the Peace of Ryswick in 1698 John Howe damned the '*sensual vices*' which might prevent Englishmen making the most from the climate of decreased tensions. Vice, he said, tended to make his countrymen '*effeminate, mean-spirited, a diffident, lazy, slothful, unhealthful people... neither fit to endure the hardships, or encounter the hazards of war, nor apply ourselves to the business or undergo the labours that belong to a state of peace...* '.<sup>354</sup> Vice, then, could cause the nation not to thrive in time of peace just as it could deliver England into the hands of its enemies in time of war.

Contemporaries could look to some of the gentlemen founders of the First Society for Reformation of Manners and their friends for temporal embodiments of the ideal of the righteous magistrate. Once on the Middlesex bench after the struggles of the early 'nineties, Sir Richard Bulkeley, Col. Maynard Colchester, William Yates and Ralph Hartley no doubt put their principles into practice. They had allies on the bench already in the shape of JPs such as Thomas Railton, John Perry and William Withers who had pledged themselves as early as 1692 to discountenance vice through the exercise of their office.<sup>355</sup> Figures such as Edward Harley must be included and his friend Sir John Phillips and, in an 'unofficial' sense, also Thomas Firmin. Occasionally more important public figures could be singled out as embodiments of the ideal. The Harley's cousin John Holles, Duke of Newcastle, one of the most powerful Whig peers of his day, was said to be '*a zealous promoter of the reformation*'.<sup>356</sup> Several London Aldermen were singled out by reformation preachers for special mention, among them Sir Thomas Abney, Sir Owen Buckingham, Sir Thomas Lane, and Sir David Hamilton.<sup>357</sup> Sir Richard Levett when Lord Mayor attended the reformation sermons with all his Aldermen and had three

<sup>353</sup> Thomas Cotton, *Salters Hall* (1702), unpaginated preface.

<sup>354</sup> John Howe, *Salters Hall* (1698), p. 28.

<sup>355</sup> EUL Laing MS III, 394, pp. 415-420.

<sup>356</sup> John Dunton, *Life and Errors* (1818), p. 341; see O. R. F. Davies, 'The Wealth and Influence of John Holles, Duke of Newcastle, 1694-1711', *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, 9 (1965), pp. 22-46.

<sup>357</sup> In the dedications to the sermons of Thomas Reynolds, *Salters Hall* (1699) and William Tong, *Salters Hall* (1703). Other examples are Dunton's acquaintances Sir Henry Ashurst, Captain Pitts, and Aldermen Heathcote (*Life and Errors*, pp. 273 and 354).

sermons dedicated to him in recognition of his efforts as a magistrate to suppress Bartholomew Fair and vice in general.<sup>358</sup> When in late 1702 Mayor Levett and thirty of his Aldermen attended Bow Church, they heard George Stanhope, Dean of Canterbury and Chaplain to Queen Anne, discourse on the benefit that righteous magistracy exercised by public figures could bestow on society.<sup>359</sup> This was a sentiment echoed by the Dissenters as well, for all reformation preachers believed a righteous magistrate was *'like an illustrious head [which] communicates life and vigour to the body politic'*.<sup>360</sup>

Reformers and their preachers were agreed that deliberate sin was akin to treason and that unrepentant sinners were next in line to political traitors in the damage they could inflict on the community. As the dissenting minister John Spademan phrased it, *'wicked men are certainly enemies to the public good, by provoking God to withdraw his protection, which is more necessary to our common interest, then either the weapons, or sinews of war'*.<sup>361</sup> Society in their view was an organic and hierarchical entity. Just as righteous magistrates could keep the edifice in harmony and prosperity, so weak or conniving magistrates had a deleterious effect on the whole community.<sup>362</sup> Equally, a slackening in the application of discipline after an initial burst of zeal could do more harm than good, for the sudden removal of severity by a magistrate would only encourage the iniquitous. This is why the reformation preachers continually counselled against enthusiasm and excessive zeal in the execution of the magistrate's office. The magistrate was expected to provide an example of constancy as well as virtue, and therefore inconsistency or favouritism was a grave transgression against the ideal of righteousness since it opened the flood gates of hypocrisy. The magistrate's private as well as his public life should be beyond reproach since, as one of William III's chaplains, William Hayley, warned, *'if magistrates will be swearers, drunkards, Sabbath-breakers, lewd and profane themselves, they may correct other men if they will, but they can never reform them; their hypocrisy will give more encouragement to vice than their authority can give terror to it'*.<sup>363</sup> Some preachers even argued that the magistrate's good example in his own life was far more powerful in persuading people to adopt good manners than

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<sup>358</sup> Edmund Calamy, Salters Hall (1699), Joshua Oldfield, Salters Hall (1699) and John Maplettoft, Bow Church (1700) all dedicated their sermons to Mayor Levett.

<sup>359</sup> Stanhope took his text from *Leviticus 19: 17* and argued that *'is it necessary in cases of public and notorious sin to set on the offender a mark of infamy and abhorrence, so as to emphasise what a Christian ought to do; reproach should be as public as the fault.'* (p. 3).

<sup>360</sup> Thomas Reynolds, Salters Hall (1700), p. 61. In March that year John Evelyn noted that *"Divers persons of quality entered into the Society for Reformation of Manners; and some lectures were set up, particularly in the city of London. The most eminent of the clergy preached at Bow Church, after reading a declaration set forth by the King to suppress the growing wickedness; this began already to take some effect as to common swearing, and oaths in the mouths of people of all ranks."* See de Beer ed., *Diary of John Evelyn*, 24 March 1700.

<sup>361</sup> John Spademan, Salters Hall (1698), p. 35.

<sup>362</sup> Josiah Woodward, Bow Church (1697) p. 48 complained that vice had too long been *'dandled upon the knees of some magistrates, who ought to have trampled it under their feet...'*

<sup>363</sup> William Hayley, Bow Church (1698), p. 28; see also Thomas Freke, Salters Hall (1704), p. 31.

his reputation for retribution when punishing evil doers.<sup>364</sup> Inconstancy in punishing offences was bad, but when God was the victim of the offence, many preachers found cause for particular worry. White Kennett described swearing, cursing, pursuing one's ordinary calling on the Sabbath as crimes '*where God alone is injured*' and '*there be few to plead for him, few to take his cause in hand*'.<sup>365</sup> Kennett argued that few paid sufficient attention to such crimes because of the growing belief that '*our laws are made only to maintain property, not at all to keep up religion*'.<sup>366</sup> But, said the preacher, religion underlay all respect for law, a point that assize preachers regularly hammered home since contempt for religion and profanations of the Sabbath were '*crimes that necessarily waste and harden men's consciences, and take off all awe and respect of duty from their minds*'.<sup>367</sup>

White Kennett's reformation of manners sermon singled out what he perceived as a new threat to the harmony of the community, namely the steady deification of property and the social rights of those possessing it. As a remedy, Kennett proposed that clergymen be placed on the bench of magistrates to safeguard the non-material and spiritual objectives of religion and that certainly in matters primarily involving religion and the honour of God, each parish priest by virtue of his office should function as a magistrate.<sup>368</sup> It is important to note that White Kennett and the other reformation of manners preachers who urged an increase in the temporal authority of the clergy to effect a reformation in society saw this power only as a complement to civil magistracy, not a substitution for it. No doubt this was a tacit acknowledgement of the ineffectiveness of ecclesiastical courts in moral matters and the low esteem in which they and their officers were generally held. Unfortunately for the reformation cause, clergy supporting strong civil magistracy were becoming particularly obnoxious to Anglicans of High Church leanings who, while agreeing on the debased nature of England's morals, saw the remedy in a return to the '*ancient, primitive discipline of the Church*' and heaped scorn on any cooperation with Dissent to increase the effectiveness of the civil power.<sup>369</sup>

The fundamental reason for the reformation preachers' concern with offences against religion was Christianity's legitimisation of the institution of magistracy itself. Without its grounding in orthodoxy, the exercise of authority would be at the mercy of competing explanations of obligation validated by nothing more than political power or human reason. This, in the accepted post-Restoration view, had led earlier in the

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<sup>364</sup> William Whitfield, Bow Church (1698), p. 4; Samuel Bradford, Bow Church (1697), p. 33.

<sup>365</sup> White Kennett, Bow Church (1702), p. 16.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> Edward Young (Dean of Salisbury and Chaplain in Ordinary to William III), *Piety's address to the Magistrate* (1695), p. 25

<sup>368</sup> Kennett, op. cit., p. 45. For contemporary parallel suggestions see Lambeth MSS 933, no. 34 and 942, no. 152.

<sup>369</sup> Henry Sacheverell, *The Character of a Low-Churchman* (1702), pp. 11-12. Sacheverell's most sustained attack on the reformers of manners was the Derby Assize sermon, *The Communication of Sin*, preached in August 1709.

century to the confusion of the Civil War and the rule of the sects.<sup>370</sup> No one among the reformers of manners, whatever their detractors might allege to the contrary, wanted a return to those days. This is why Thomas Bray, by now a leading figure in the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and charity school movement, argued in his reformation sermon in 1708 that *'by a vigorous and impartial execution of the laws against profaneness and immorality, especially against such acts of that kind as are mere outrages against that divine majesty from whom they derive their own authority'*, magistrates could do most to safeguard society and combat evil.<sup>371</sup>

On a more immediately practical level, disrespect for the honour of God if it led to widespread use of holy names in common discourse, could disrupt commercial, judicial and social life and ultimately the bonds holding men in allegiance to the state. As Gilbert Burnet observed, England was *'the nation of the whole world that has studied the most to secure itself by oaths'*.<sup>372</sup> Undermine the symbolic potency of official oaths, ran this argument, and society would inherit disorder when the young imitated *'those execrable oaths and curses, the vomit which even children lick up'*.<sup>373</sup> Not only social confusion but individual disharmony would result from dishonouring God by swearing, cursing or profaning the Sabbath. Once a man could no longer be curbed by the sense of shame and realisation of sin, then he became an irrational creature cast out by all right-thinking men. Alsop painted the bleak fate of the unrepentant sinner: *'him whom the bonds of divine fear will not hold, neither covenants, nor contracts with his neighbour, will hold; he that breaks with God breaks with the world'*.<sup>374</sup>

When it came to the power of good examples shown in the lives of public people as encouragements to good manners among the masses, even satirists such as Ned Ward agreed with the reformers of manners.<sup>375</sup> In a deferential and hierarchical society, good examples from above were vital since, as the reformation preachers explained, ordinary persons lived by precedent rather than precept and would copy their social betters. Thus *'if the master will swear, the servant thinks he has a good warrant for his swearing; if a minister will drink, his hearers will be drunk; if a magistrate will profane the Lord's Day, the people will quote his example and justify their practice by it'*.<sup>376</sup> One preacher even ventured that good examples would make the pains of the law superfluous since *'men would abstain from gross immoralities, if for no other reason, yet that they might not be accounted singular'*.<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> Richard Tuck, 'Power and Authority in Seventeenth Century England', *Historical Journal*, 17 (1974), pp. 43-61.

<sup>371</sup> Thomas Bray, *Bow Church* (1709) p. 20.

<sup>372</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *Bow Church* (1700), 22.

<sup>373</sup> William Whitfield, *Bow Church* (1698), p. 7.

<sup>374</sup> Vincent Alsop, *Salters Hall* (1698), pp. 24-25.

<sup>375</sup> Edward Ward, *Labour in Vain* (1700), pp. 350-351.

<sup>376</sup> Alsop, *op. cit.*, p. 12; see also Thomas Freke, *Salters Hall* (1704), pp. 2-3 and William Hayley, *Bow Church* (1698) p. 28.

<sup>377</sup> Freke, *op. cit.*, p. 31.



Perhaps it was understandable for untutored labourers to profane the Sabbath or get drunk, but it was against all reason in men of higher station and *'contrary to their many advantages of learning and education'*.<sup>378</sup> If the great and powerful were to give good examples, then they must also be subject to the impartial execution of the laws and correcting a great sinner might even have a remedial effect by reducing national guilt far more than the punishment of a humble one.<sup>379</sup>

Not all preachers shared this sanguine view. The dissenter John Shower, brother of the wealthy Tory lawyer Bartholomew Shower, frankly admitted that many guilty persons were above the reach of even highly-placed reformers. Certainly, Shower said, what is a sin in a servant is also a sin in his master, though *'in some cases, as matters now are, where it would be likely to do more hurt than good, I think you may forbear and hope that the punishment of meaner persons, will so far influence the greater sort, as to bring them to be more private and less scandalous in their crimes'*.<sup>380</sup> Daniel Defoe satirised this view in *The Poor Man's Plea* (1698) with his charge that so long as sinners were wealthy or influential they escaped the reformers' net.<sup>381</sup> Though other preachers refuted Defoe, the reformation campaign was never able to shake off this criticism. Another criticism refuted by reformation preachers was that the law enforcement campaign sought to break down social barriers and blur the distinction between great and humble.<sup>382</sup> Though they insisted that all human creatures were equally obligated to honour God by keeping the laws concerning his holy names and his special day, most preachers carefully qualified this in practice. The famous nonconformist minister Daniel Williams preaching in 1698 counselled due respect for the hierarchical nature of society in cautioning his hearers not to go *'out of your own station'* in correcting sinners. Neither were reformers to use any *'unjustifiable means, least you prove snares to others, or yourselves, instead of reformers'*.<sup>383</sup> Certainly immorality and profaneness amounted, as another preacher claimed, to *'attempted rapes upon all that is orderly and sacred'*.<sup>384</sup> But this did not mean that reformers of manners should themselves adopt irregular tactics in their response to the irrational acts of men. *'Your zeal must be orderly'* was a common refrain from the pulpit. *'It must not transport you beyond the bounds of your places and callings'*. Above all, private persons must not usurp the offices of priests and magistrates, but rather act as Christian subjects *'in their own sphere towards that good end they have before them'*.<sup>385</sup> The fact that such pulpit reminders were necessary shows both that the reformers of manners were

<sup>378</sup> Timothy Rogers, *Salters Hall* (1700) p. 56.

<sup>379</sup> Benjamin Robinson, *Salters Hall* (1701), p. 34; and Rogers, *op.cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>380</sup> John Shower, *Salters Hall* (1697), p. 45.

<sup>381</sup> See also Defoe's *Reformation of Manners: A Satyr*, (1702).

<sup>382</sup> The charge was brought primarily by High Church propagandists such as Sacheverell and Charles Leslie. The Oxford antiquary and highchurchman, Thomas Hearne, damned the reformers as *'a knavish society for carrying on rebellion and wickedness'* in *Remarks and Collections* (ed., Dobel), II, p. 74 entry for 21 November 1707.

<sup>383</sup> Daniel Williams, *Salters Hall* (1698) p. 58.

<sup>384</sup> Matthew Sylvester, *Salters Hall* (1697), p. 58.

<sup>385</sup> Lilly Butler, *Bow Church* (1697), pp. 19-20.

sensitive to charges levelled against the movement of trickery and venality to gain convictions and that there were probably some grounds for their anxieties given the number of parish officers who, for one reason or another, associated themselves with the reforming societies throughout London.

The reformers followed their belief in the irrationality of sin to conclude that if friendly admonitions failed to reform a person whose education and station made him amenable to such persuasion, then he was like a madman who through delusion attempted suicide.<sup>386</sup> To such persons it was a positive charity to offer the physical punishments decreed by the laws, for it saved their bodies from poverty and disease, their immortal souls from damnation, and the society in which they lived from collective guilt likely to result in divine punishments. For those of whatever station who persisted in breaking down the constraints of good manners, magistrates were the divinely ordained agents for administering sharp corrections which, as the first reformation preacher Josiah Woodward argued, '*must in all reason be esteemed as a greater kindness, and of a more noble and extensive nature, than the physician's lancing and scarifying our bodies ...*'<sup>387</sup>

Neither God nor his magistrates, the argument often ran, wished to inflict suffering, but it was necessary when some would not be guided by other means to a sober and righteous life. When religion and the law were flouted, then '*public convenience calls for [sinners] being chained up and restrained... [so that] they may be hindered from destroying others*'.<sup>388</sup> Refusal to reform had a clear imperative for the righteous magistrate: he must yield his sword to guard the commonweal and ensure '*that sin and misery may not be epidemical, that those who are resolved to be undone, may be so in as little company as possible, and may perish alone, and not draw after them the overthrow of the city*'.<sup>389</sup> In the last resort when admonition and physical correction both failed, then the law of nature dictated '*that it is expedient one man should die, and not that a whole nation perish or be endangered*'.<sup>390</sup> In all of his actions to achieve reformation the magistrate should be seen to act impartially and without vindictiveness. Otherwise '*the zeal of such endeavours will show a great concern to see men punished rather than reformed. It will not be punishing men's persons, that we may reform their vices; but punishing their vices, that we may hurt their persons*'.<sup>391</sup>

In the Christian viewpoint of the time, mankind's capacity for goodness was strictly limited by the taint of original sin and thus men were incapable of leading virtuous lives without the constant attentions of Christian precepts and legal constraints which

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<sup>386</sup> See *An Essay concerning Friendly Reproof* (1696), *passim*.

<sup>387</sup> Josiah Woodward, *Bow Church* (1697), p. 51; see also. *An Essay for Reformation of Manners... Wherein the Sword of the Word, in concurrence with the Sword of the Magistrate, is drawn against Immoralities* (circa. 1699).

<sup>388</sup> Benjamin Gravener, *Salters Hall* (1705), p. 7.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>390</sup> Benjamin Robinson, *Salters Hall* (1701), p. 30.

<sup>391</sup> Lilly Butler, *Bow Church* (1697), p. 18.

together embodied God's will for temporal society. This is why preachers stressed that magistrates received their authority from God *'for edification, and not for destruction'* and that their punishment of wrongdoers was *'not only an act of justice, but a great instance of charity and kindness to the offender himself'*.<sup>392</sup> *'Our hostility is only to their vices'* was a frequent claim, *'which is indeed the truest friendship to their persons. We aim at the destruction of nothing but their sins, which will prove the salvation of their souls'*.<sup>393</sup> Whether the prostitutes, swearers, cursers, drunkards and others who were fined, whipped or pilloried for their offences against moral standards at the instigation of reformers of manners, appreciated that *'the very wounds of the sword of justice... are not from an enemy, but in their design and tendency are friendly and medicinal'* is a moot point.<sup>394</sup>

Taken collectively, these sermons whether preached by Anglicans or Dissenters are an extended apologia for a programme of social intervention to achieve enforcement of the existing laws against immoralities. To the query *'Am I my brother's keeper?'* the reformation preachers answered strongly in the affirmative. True Christians, they added, could take only this position, as Josiah Woodward emphasised by taking as his text for the first Bow Church sermon in 1697 *Leviticus 19: 17--'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart. Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him'*. Woodward gave his sermon the title *The Duty of Compassion to the Souls of Others, in endeavouring their Reformation* so that readers would be in no doubt about his message. No doubt Woodward's experiences of ministering to the swollen London out-parish of Poplar sharpened his conviction that *'a public sinner does not only sin against his own soul, but against the community of which he is a member'* with the result that *'the mischiefs which attend his sin are general, and spread widely and universally'*.<sup>395</sup> From this standpoint correcting sin by executing the laws was the very opposite of meddling in a neighbour's personal affairs. To ignore public sin, indeed, only showed callous disregard to a soul in peril and there was no hint in these sermons that a Christian could choose any other course but to report the sin to a magistrate. God's will might be spurned, but it could not be denied, as the dissenting divine Matthew Sylvester emphasised to his hearers; *'You are God's own, as to property, obligation, and accountableness, whether you will or no; nor can you divest Him of his right to use you as He pleases'*.<sup>396</sup>

One way the preachers sought to convince their hearers and readers that God intended Christians to act was as assistants to righteous magistrates. The existing enforcement machinery was quite inadequate both in numbers and not infrequently

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<sup>392</sup> Robinson, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>393</sup> Gravener, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

<sup>394</sup> Robinson, *ibid.*

<sup>395</sup> Woodward, Bow Church (1697), p. 14. Jonathan Swift in *The Examiner* No. 42 (24 May 1711) described the totally inadequate religious provision for the London outparishes where *'the care of above thirty thousand souls hath been sometimes committed to one minister, whose church could hardly contain the twentieth part of his flock'*.

<sup>396</sup> Matthew Sylvester, *Salter's Hall* (1697), p. 56.

in quality to the task marked out for it by the reformation movement. To make up the difference the preachers echoed the movement's earlier propagandists by turning to the Old Testament and deriving an argument that all Christian patriots were obliged to assist magistrates by supplying the informations which would lead to prosecution, conviction and punishment of those whose sins endangered the nation. As one Anglican preacher put this, even godly magistrates *'cannot exercise that power, given them by God and the King, of making the sword in their hands an effectual terror to evil doers, without evidence and conviction'*. To procure these, *'it lies upon private persons to assist them'*, though with the caution never to step outside one's proper station in doing so.<sup>397</sup> Failure to provide informations involved the onlooker with the sin of the guilty party and only increased the magnitude of England's national guilt which was so abhorrent to God.<sup>398</sup> From these exhortations to become informers it was relatively easy for the movement's detractors and satirists to claim the reforming societies were only secret armies of busy-bodies. As White Kennett lamented at the end of 1701, this charge was a burden which the reformers would have to bear however much they disliked it. Their only compensation, the future Bishop of Peterborough said, was the secure knowledge that their Christian and patriotic acts were of such a high order in God's eyes that this far outweighed the sniping of their enemies.<sup>399</sup>

A particularly difficult burden for the reformers, in addition to this charge, was the knowledge that antipathetic justices of the peace were numerous in London and other towns. Even placing some of the gentlemen of the First Society for Reformation on the Middlesex bench had not been enough to convert those magistrates *'from whom justice against profane wretches must be extorted by a violent importunity through a multitude of shifts and evasions, which the air of their countenance marks out the informer as the principal criminal'*.<sup>400</sup> King William's proclamation of 24 February 1698 blamed magisterial negligence for the eroded condition of the nation's manners and exhorted Englishmen to supply magistrates with private informations against offenders.<sup>401</sup> Evidence from the reformation sermons preached around the time of the proclamation suggests that changing the attitudes of lax or hostile magistrates would take far more than firm sounding words in royal proclamations. In June 1698 Thomas Jekyll's Bow sermon flayed JPs who continued to ignore the proclamation and attacked the hypocrisy of others who, while pretending to invite informations, actually were more vicious than those they were meant to punish. Discouragements to informers could go beyond the tactics of justices who *'instead of encouraging those honest informers, who thus come to them... in the fear of God and in charity to the souls of men, by making their work easy and safe, do all that in them lies to make it both troublesome and dangerous,*

<sup>397</sup> Lilly Butler, Bow Church (1697), preface sig. A2.

<sup>398</sup> John Russell, Bow Church (1697), p. 35; John Howe, Salters Hall (1698) p. 12.

<sup>399</sup> White Kennett, Bow Church (1702) p. 19.

<sup>400</sup> Jabez Earle, Salters Hall (1704), dedication to Sir Robert Thomas.

<sup>401</sup> Luttrell, *Brief Relation*, 4, p. 342ff

*and thereby to beat them off from engaging any further therein*'. This preacher further claimed that frequently informers were *'beaten and wounded at the very doors of these magistrates, without protection or redress'*. Complaints against such judicial conduct only met *'with nothing... but scoffs and jeers'*.<sup>402</sup> Like the accusation of meddling in private affairs, the problem presented by lax or openly hostile magistrates was a persistent one to which the reformers never found a satisfactory solution.

The ideal earthly state of a permanently virtuous society brought about by reformation of manners endeavours and the continued ministrations of righteous magistrates was occasionally glimpsed by some reformation preachers, but on the whole their concerns had more relevance to the contemporary fact of England's perils at home and from abroad. In some sermons, this produced an argument akin to the Puritan idea of a *'saving remnant'* sufficiently godly in itself at least to stave off total national catastrophe. No one doubted, as King William's chaplain William Whitfield warned in March 1698, that national guilt would attract divine judgments, for *'the justice of God requires that the community should suffer, and the punishment become as general as the offence'*.<sup>403</sup> But a public discountenancing of vice by magistrates and people might just be sufficient to persuade God, as Richard Willis one of Queen Anne's chaplains argued in 1704, *'that though the offenders may be many, yet that God will not look upon the wickedness to be national, nor punish the whole for it, but let every man bear his own burden, and the guilt follow only the particular offenders'*.<sup>404</sup> Too much stress should not be laid on this relatively isolated instance of a departure from the 'party line' of national judgments following from the collective guilt of uncorrected sins. But it does show that early in Queen Anne's time at least some reformers liked to hear that at least when the deluge came, they would be spared whatever was to be the fate of their reprobate countrymen.

A similar deviation from majority opinion can be found in the treatment some preachers gave to outward reformation as opposed to sincere repentance. No one was naive enough to believe, as Edward Fowler the Bishop of Gloucester phrased it, that any man *'is the more religious for abstaining from the practice of any vice, merely for fear of temporal penalties'*.<sup>405</sup> But if fear of corporal or pecuniary punishment and the avoidance of public humiliation did cause an outward improvement in manners sufficient to make sinners *'give over offending scandalously, and debauching others by their infectious example, and ensnaring practices'*, then open dishonour to God would be lessened and this could only be beneficial to the nation.<sup>406</sup> Perhaps this approach was fruitful, for in 1711, almost twelve years after Bishop Fowler's sermon, Charles Trimmell, then Bishop of

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<sup>402</sup> Thomas Jekyll, Bow Church (1698), unpaginated dedicatory epistle; see also Isaac Watts, Salters Hall (1707), p. 45.

<sup>403</sup> William Whitfield, Bow Church (1698), p. 17.

<sup>404</sup> Richard Willis, Bow Church (1704), p. 35.

<sup>405</sup> Edward Fowler, Bow Church (1699), p. 26.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Norwich, found cause to rejoice in his reformation sermon that profaneness and lewdness were '*at least more concealed than they were, and one would hope... somewhat abated*'.<sup>407</sup> One preacher even embraced hypocrisy if it would result in greater public propriety since it was '*better that God and religion should be (though it were but seemingly) honoured, by some pretenders to religion, then openly affronted by profane and loose men*'.<sup>408</sup> Though these opinions on outward reformation were minority views, they do indicate some blurring in the thought of the reformation's apologists. Perhaps this resulted from the reformation movement's changing fortunes from the late 'nineties when eight sermons were preached a year in London until, for all practical purposes, they became less frequent formalities as Queen Anne's reign drew to a close. Whatever the reason, it does show that some reformers were willing to settle for a good deal less than true reformation of England's manners if this meant that national guilt and the danger of divine chastisement in the form of a French and Jacobite invasion were lessened.

Without exception the model of social organisation advanced in these sermons was that of the patriarchal Christian household in which the *pater familias* instilled good manners into children as a natural consequence of their instruction in religious precepts. In rewarding and encouraging virtue and being a terror to evil doers, the magistrate performed this same function for society as a whole. Indeed, many reformation preachers lamented that if only family devotion and discipline had maintained the high standards of former (i.e. pre-Civil War) times, the need for righteous magistrates to guard the community would be much less.<sup>409</sup> Proper religious life in individual households would, it was claimed, '*in great measure prevent the care of the magistrate, and render the execution of laws against impiety and immorality in a good degree needless*'.<sup>410</sup>

The abundant literature of the time on household government stressed the need for early inculcation of Christian principles into children and servants. If they escaped this indoctrination, then all manner of disruptions both domestic and social were sure to result. More than one preacher reflecting on the Stuarts' alleged laxness gave it as his opinion that '*the want of this care in the heads of families especially in the last generation, has been a very great occasion of the looseness of this age*'.<sup>411</sup> Anglicans and Dissenters were firmly agreed on this point. For both, Christian family discipline was the corner-stone of the social edifice. Samuel Wesley, father of Methodism's founders and a supporter of the reformation movement from the beginning, summarised this in his view that '*good manners are the bond and cement of all societies, and good laws the life of good manners... [and] the want of discipline*

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<sup>407</sup> Charles Trimnell, Bow Church (1711), p. 21.

<sup>408</sup> John Hancock, Bow Church (1699), p. 25.

<sup>409</sup> See parallel arguments in Thomas Risley, *The Cursed Family; or, a Short Tract showing the Pernicious Influence of Wicked Prayerless Households upon this Church and Kingdom* (1700) and [Robert Nelson] *An Earnest exhortation to Householdors to set up the Worship of God in their Families* (1702).

<sup>410</sup> Samuel Bradford, Bow Church (1697), p. 33.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid.

*is the ruin of families, and that the restoration thereof would make better servants, better children, better masters, and render all relations much more useful and comfortable, and happy'.<sup>412</sup>*

Heads of households had a specific duty in the eyes of these preachers to instruct those in their care in the principles of the Christian religion and see that they properly observed the Sabbath. Both parents and masters had this duty towards subordinates and the warning was often given in reformation sermons of the practical consequences of neglecting the Sabbath. If children and servants, warned John Shower, were not *'employed in religious exercises on the Lord's Day, if they are left to themselves, to do nothing, or to do what they please. . . you expose them to such temptations as many ways may be injurious to yourselves, and in the end destructive to them'*. Did not everyone know, as the preacher reminded his audience, that *'there are few, that come to a miserable and shameful death in this world, but acknowledge... and date their wickedness and their ruin from their neglecting to keep holy the Lord's Day'*.<sup>413</sup>

Material interests were dependent on this religious discipline, and householders were reminded that their prosperity would be safeguarded by the achievement of reformed manners. *'Do but consider',* ran a typical warning, *'how much the peace and safety of your families, the trade, the riches and prosperity of the city (which consists of particular families) is owing to good laws, and to the terror of the annexed punishments; and you will hereby discern your own interest so wrapped up in the public, as to infer your duty to promote the administration of justice'*.<sup>414</sup>

At times the warning of material consequences of corrupt manners was quite lurid. Starting from an unquestioned patriarchalism, the Anglican John Hancock, said that since families *'are the elements of the body politic'*, if family life failed to achieve its Christian objectives, then *'the constitution... must needs be very crazy'*.<sup>415</sup> The well-known dissenting preacher Isaac Watts expanded on this in his sermon in order to warn that family indiscipline coupled with public indifference to good manners would lead directly to financial ruin through profligacy, bad marriages, the pox or the gibbet, and to a general assault on property by the insubordinate lower orders of society. The owners of wealth who held back from support of the reformers' campaign were warned by Watts that *'the time may come when you shall be scarce secure in your own dwellings, but be robbed of your treasures by nightly villains that will satisfy their*

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<sup>412</sup> Samuel Wesley, *A Sermon concerning Reformation of Manners preached at St. James's Westminster* (1698), p. 10.

<sup>413</sup> John Shower, *Salter's Hall* (1697), p. 25; This is borne out by the 'confessions and dying speeches' printed by the Ordinary of Newgate in *A Select and Impartial Account of the Lives, Behaviour, and Dying Words of the most remarkable Convicts, from the year 1700* (3 vols., 2nd. ed., 1745), *passim*. For the place of the dying speech as a warning to youth in the theatre of public executions see Peter Linebaugh, 'The Tyburn Riot Against the Surgeons' in Hay et. al. *Albion's Fatal Tree* (1975), pp. 65-117.

<sup>414</sup> Shower, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26. See also England's *Glory Begun in 1) Restoring our Religion, 2) Rectifying our Coin, to be compete in 3) Reforming our Manners* (1698).

<sup>415</sup> John Hancock, *Bow Church* (1699), p. 18.

*lusts by rapine, and make provision for their flesh by plunder and violence*'.<sup>416</sup>

Whether such blood curdling prophesies made any converts to the reformation movement is difficult to gauge. What is more apparent, though, from the repeated emphasis in these sermons on the need for properly disciplined families to maintain social gradations and general stability, is the feeling that such an arrangement was under siege in the Metropolis largely because of a breakdown in the effectiveness of the Church's role in the urban setting.

In their uses of the themes of righteous magistracy, the commonweal and the patriarchal Christian household, the reformation of manners preachers never ventured outside accepted philosophical concepts. Their arguments were inspired by their requested function, namely to restate the principles of and re-inspire the participants in the London reformation movement. The contradictions inherent in patriarchal political theory elaborated by other writers did not emerge in these sermons.<sup>417</sup> It would have been nonsensical to have paused midway in their campaign of law enforcement in order to ponder on the validity of their scripturally-derived principles. What the reformers wanted was action, not debate about its necessity. Merely hoping or praying for an improvement in England's moral health without acting to bring this about through a reformation of the nation's manners '*may justly pass for the effect of hypocrisy or formality*', as one preacher warned, '*and tend rather to provoke almighty God, than to obtain his favour toward us*'.<sup>418</sup>

The alternative to action was a brutish anarchy characterised, as they saw it, by Thomas Hobbes, to be followed by a final divine punishment. Dissenting reformation preachers in particular were keen in their condemnations of Hobbesian political theory. To some he was a virtual Antichrist contesting for a world whose only defence was Christian civic virtue. What the preachers disliked most of all was Hobbes' reliance on calculated self-interest for social cohesion, since this expression of individual wills conflicted with God's command to Christians to act out of brotherly love and honour of God in safeguarding the commonweal by having care for their neighbours' immortal souls by leading them when necessary towards righteousness. How could such mutual obligation exist if not ordained by God, wondered Edmund Calamy, if men in a state of nature were '*free and at liberty to do what they please; to be in enmity and in a war with each other; to have no rule of duty, no obligation to their brethren...?*'<sup>419</sup>

For these men there was no alternative to Christianity as a source of social obligation and this explains why preachers and their hearers and readers expended

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<sup>416</sup> Isaac Watts, *Salters Hall* (1707), pp. 30-31.

<sup>417</sup> The best discussion of the varieties of patriarchal theory is Gordon J. Schochet, *Patriarchalism in Political Thought: The Authoritarian Family and Political Education and Attitudes in Seventeenth Century England* (Oxford 1975); see also his earlier article "Patriarchalism, Politics and Mass Attitudes in Stuart England" *Historical Journal*, 12 (1969), pp. 413-441.

<sup>418</sup> Samuel Bradford, *Bow Church* (1697), p. 39.

<sup>419</sup> Edmund Calamy, *Salters Hall* (1699), p. 12; see also Robert Fleming, *Salters Hall* (1699) p. 35.



so much of their verbal and physical energies in defending it through the medium of the laws which Christianity imbued.<sup>420</sup> The goal of such efforts was the attractive one of a nation tending to '*the temporal and eternal good of men, to the ease and quiet, and freedom of the mind; to the health and strength and welfare of the body; to the order, peace and prosperity of families; to the honour and reputation, the riches and strength, the peace and concord, the good order and government, the safety and happiness of the whole community*'.<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> See the parallel argument in William Fleetwood (Bishop of Ely), *The Relative Duties of Parents, Husbands, and Masters* (1705), p. 86ff. on the origin of social obligation.

<sup>421</sup> John Sheffield, *Salters Hall* (1705), pp. 42-43.

## PREACHERS OF SERMONS FOR REFORMATION OF MANNERS AT ST. MARY LE BOW AND SALTERS HALL IN LONDON BETWEEN 1697 AND 1715

There is no surviving list of these sermons, if such a contemporary record ever existed. This compilation reflects my own searches for the sermons in various places and may be incomplete.

It is known that both Anglican and Nonconformist reformers of manners in the years immediately after the start of the sermons heard them near the quarter days of the year. This is proven by the full lists for both persuasions for the years 1697 and 1698. Thereafter the number drops quickly to two per year for both groups and the regularity of this pattern in the years after 1698 suggests that it is more than coincidence. This is partly confirmed by the fact that at Bow Church by 1703 reformation sermons were only being preached on the first Mondays following Christmas and Lady Day (25 March), and that by 1714 this had been reduced to an annual sermon at Christmastime.<sup>422</sup>

My list suggests that the reduction to an annual sermon occurred, for Anglicans, as early as 1705. Co-operation between established churchmen and nonconformists was a hall-mark of the reforming effort and this is borne out by the pattern of sermons towards the end of the period when the Anglicans had theirs at the close of the year and the Dissenters had two, and then one, additional sermon on other quarter days so as to spread the sermons throughout the year.

In the following list, sermons are grouped according to the year in which they were preached rather than the year of publication, since in the case of sermons preached at the close of the year this could be different. Most sermons when published took the general title *A sermon preached at..... to the Societies for Reformation of Manners in London and Westminster on.....* A few also had running titles and where these are known they are given following the entry. All published sermons carried the imprimatur '*published at the request of the Societies*' in some form of words. The Anglican preachers are listed together with their appointment or rank at the time of preaching. Dissenters were seldom identified further than the phrase 'Minister of the Gospel', but many of the capital's better known nonconformist divines occur in the list of Salters Hall preachers.

### Sermons preached at St. Mary le Bow

#### 1697

Josiah Woodward (Minister of Poplar) 28.12.96 (counts as the first sermon of the new year) *The Duty of Compassion to the Souls of Others, in endeavouring their reformation*

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<sup>422</sup> See the single sheet *Account of the Time and Place of Morning and Evening Prayers .. and of Lecture Sermons in the Several Churches in the Bills of Mortality* (1703) and James Paterson, *Pietas Londinensis*, p.217.

Lilly Butler (Minister of St. Mary, Aldermanbury) 5.4.97

John Russell (Rector of St. John's, Wapping) 28.6.97

Samuel Bradford (Rector of St. Mary le Bow) 9.10.97

#### 1698

William Whitfeld (Chaplain in Ordinary to William III and Canon of St. Paul's) 28.3.98  
*A Discourse on the Duty of Showing Forth a Good Example in our Lives*

Thomas Jekyll (Preacher at the New Church, Westminster and Rector of Rowel, Wiltshire) 27.6.98

William Hayley (Rector of St. Giles's in the Fields and Chaplain in Ordinary to William III) 3.10.98

John Hancock (Rector of St. Margaret's Lothbury and Chaplain to the Duke of Bedford) 26.12.98

#### 1699

Edward Fowler (Bishop of Gloucester) 26.6.99

Samuel Barton (Prebendary of Westminster) 2.10.99

#### 1700

John Mapletoft (Vicar of St. Lawrence Jewry) 1.1.1700

Gilbert Burnet (Bishop of Salisbury) 25.3.1700 *Charitable Reproof*

#### 1701

Simon Patrick (Bishop of Ely) 30.12.1700 (counts as first sermon of 1701)

Nicholas Stratford (Bishop of Chester) 31.3.01

#### 1702

White Kennett (Archdeacon of Huntingdon) 29.12.01

William Talbot (Bishop of Oxford) 30.3.02

#### 1703

George Stanhope (Chaplain in Ordinary to Queen Anne and Dean of Canterbury) 28.12.02 *The Duty of Rebuking*

John Williams (Bishop of Chichester) 30.3.03

#### 1704

Richard Willis (Chaplain in Ordinary to Queen Anne and Dean of Lincoln) 3.1.04

William Bisset (Elder Brother of St. Catherine's by the Tower) 27.3.04 *Plain English*  
1705

John Hough (Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry) 1.1.05

1706

William Wake (Bishop of Lincoln) 31.12.05 (counts as annual sermon for 1706 and was preached at St. Lawrence Jewry).

1707

William Nicholson (Bishop of Carlisle) 30.12.06. (counts for 1707)

1708

Thomas Bray (Minister of St. Botolph's, Aldgate) 27.12.08 *For God or for Satan*

1709

Peter Newcome (Vicar of Hackney) 26.12.09

1710

William Colnett (Fellow of All Souls, Oxford) 1.1.11 (counts for 1710)

1711

Charles Trimnell (Bishop of Norwich) 31.12.11

1712

John Gasgarth (title unknown) 29.12.12

1713

John Waugh (Rector of St. Peter's, Cornhill) 28.12.13

1714 and 1715 Bow Church sermons not accessible.

#### Sermons preached at Salters Hall

1697

Daniel Burgess 15.2.97 *The Golden Snuffers, or Christian Reprovers and Reformers Characterised, Cautioned, and Encouraged*

John Woodhouse 31.5.97 *A Call to Reformation*

Matthew Sylvester 16.9.97 *Holy Confidence well improved by Nehemiah and the Jews*

John Shower 15.11.97 *None Calleth for Justice*

1698

John Howe 14.2.98

Daniel Williams 16.5.98

Vincent Alsop 15.8.98

John Spademan 14.11.98

1699

Edmund Calamy the Younger 20.2.99

Robert Fleming the Younger 15.5.99. *The Divine Government of Nations considered and Improved*

Joshua Oldfield 13.11.99 *Christ the Head of Civil Government*

1700

Thomas Reynolds 19.2.1700

Isaac Mauduit 13.5.1700

Timothy Rogers 7.10.1700

1701

Benjamin Robinson 30.6.01

Samuel Promfret 6.10.01

1702

William Harris 29.6.02

Thomas Cotton 5.10.02

1703

John Galpine the Younger 28.6.03

William Tong 4.10.03

1704

Jabez Earle 26.6.04

Thomas Freke 2.10.04

1705

Benjamin Gravener (sometime 'Grosvenor') 2.7.05

John Sheffield 1.10.05

1706

John Billingsley the Younger 1.7.06

Samuel Palmer 7.10.06

1707

John Evans 30.6.07

Isaac Watts 6.10.07

1708

Thomas Bradbury 28.6.08

Thomas Simmons 4.10.08

1709

Zachery Merrell 29.6.09

John Newman 3.10.09

1710

No Salters Hall sermons accessible<sup>423</sup>

1711

Matthew Clarke 2.7.11

1712

Matthew Henry 30.6.12

1713

Jeremiah Smith 29.6.13. *The Right Reformer's Character and Duty*

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<sup>423</sup> The Sacheverell Riots probably explain the absence of published Salters Hall sermons for 1710. If any were preached, prudence may have caused the London reformers not to print them since High Church mobs destroyed the meeting houses of reformation preachers Daniel Burgess, Thomas Bradbury and Jabez Earle and were heading for Shower's meeting house and Salters Hall itself before halted by troops on the night of 1 March 1710. See Holmes, *Trial of Dr. Sacheverell* (1973), chap. 7 *passim*.

1714

James Coningham (or 'Cunningham') 28.6.14

1715

Samuel Wright 27.6.15

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE REFORMATION MOVEMENT VIEWED BY CONTEMPORARIES

This chapter collects various perspectives on the reformation of manners movement both from its admirers and its detractors from the late 1690s until the end of Queen Anne's reign. Some of the successes and failures of attempts to emulate the London law enforcement campaign in the provinces are followed by an examination of the position vis a vis the reformers taken by government and church leaders during this period. The chapter ends with a discussion of the involvement of the movement in the propaganda battles launched by High Church elements against Dissent and moderate Anglicanism during Anne's reign.

#### Civil Authorities

To a casual observer of the English scene in the later 1690s, it might have appeared, as the reformers of manners certainly believed, that the nation's rulers were inclined towards their cause and were actively pursuing a reformation of England's manners by means of royal proclamations against vice and statutes such as 6&7 Will. III, c. 11 aimed at swearing and blasphemy. Parliamentary reformers of manners such as Edward Harley and Sir John Phillips had pressed several projects to fruition which, according to White Kennett, '*gave a new zeal to the worthy persons who had engaged themselves in the voluntary societies for the reformation of manners*'<sup>424</sup>

Attendance was high at the quarterly reformation sermons preached at Bow Church and Salters Hall, and the capital's reformation directors in the First Society were preparing to issue a substantial pamphlet running to more than one hundred and fifty pages describing the respectable pedigrees and cumulative successes of the reformation societies nationwide. So popular was this *Account of the Societies for Reformation of Manners in London and Westminster* (whose title was soon changed to an *Account ... in England and Ireland*) that the initial print run of 20,000 was quickly sold and by 1701 the publication was growing in pages and into a fifth edition.<sup>425</sup>

More significant from the standpoint of outside approbation was the growing list of endorsements which successive editions carried, for here were the names of eminent peers, church leaders and judges acclaiming both the design and the methods of the reformation movement as '*so truly great and noble, so much for the*

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<sup>424</sup> Kennett, *Compleat History*, III, p. 746. See also Sharp Papers, Box 3, Bundle No. 88 (Edward Fowler to Sharp, 18 April 1699).

<sup>425</sup> The first edition cost over £500 according to Bishop Fowler, Sharp Papers, op. cit., and was written by a layman with legal training, most probably William Yates of Lincoln's Inn, a member of the First Society for Reformation of Manners.



*honour of God, the advancement of piety and virtue, and the public good both of Church and State, that it cannot fail of being approved by all good men'.<sup>426</sup>*

The first edition of the *Account in London and Westminster* in 1699 published by Barbizon Aylmer and later by the prolific Joseph Downing carried the following names. The signatories were overwhelmingly representative of the Whig and Low Church interests:

#### Lords Spiritual

Carlisle [Thomas Smith]  
Bangor [Humphrey Humphries]  
Chester [Nicholas Stratford]  
Gloucester [Edward Fowler]  
Ely [Simon Patrick]  
Bristol [John Hall]  
Bath and Wells [Richard Kidder]  
Oxford [John Hough]  
Chichester [John Williams]

#### Judges

Edward Ward  
Edward Neville  
Nicholas Lechmere  
Thomas Rokeby  
John Turton  
John Blencowe  
Henry Hatsell

#### Lords Temporal

Pembroke (Lord President)  
Lonsdale (Lord Privy Seal)  
Leeds  
Bedford  
Lindsey  
Kent  
Bridgewater  
Thanet  
Radnor  
Abingdon  
Portland  
Falconberg  
Warrington  
Rochford  
Say and Sele  
Longvile

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<sup>426</sup> *An Account of the Societies for Reformation of Manners in London and Westminster*, sig. A2. The title was altered to *Account .... in England and Ireland* by the 3rd edition.

Willoughby of Parham  
Brook  
Maynard  
Berkeley of Stratton  
Dartmouth  
Guilford  
Haversham  
Barnard  
Digby  
Allington  
Cutts

With such 'leads from the top' it is not surprising that an earlier historian of the reformation movement argued for a positive identification in the late 'nineties between England's rulers at Court and in Parliament, and the endeavours and methods of the reformers of manners.<sup>427</sup> A closer examination of the evidence, however, reveals that this concurrence was more apparent than real. Indeed, at times during 1698 the central government was preoccupied with the movement's potential to foster faction and political intrigue rather than its professed desire to achieve social harmony. In the provinces, too, serious divergences can be detected between what county magistrates in Quarter Sessions said in response to documents such as King William's 1698 *Proclamation for Preventing and Punishing Immorality and Profaneness* and what they did in the way of implementing it.

The Justices of the Peace for Middlesex, among whom were several prominent members of the First Society for Reformation of Manners, were quick to enter the King's Proclamation in the Sessions Books and followed it with an order of their own that constables and other offices caution all public houses about their duty not to permit tippling abuses on the Sabbath.<sup>428</sup> This and other promising moves from the Middlesex bench led the reformers of manners to applaud their conformity to *'his Majesty's positive commands, together with the concurrent advice in this matter ... of the Commons of England, for things ... not only unquestionably lawful, but highly important and necessary for the strict execution of the known laws of the land against profaneness and immorality, agreeable to the word of God ....'*<sup>429</sup> To their approval they added a sombre warning should William's prudent intentions be thwarted: *Whoever therefore they are that in this case oppose the King's commands, who either openly obstructs, or secretly undermines the endeavours of those who act in this affair in obedience to the will of God, the commend of the King, and for the*

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<sup>427</sup> John S. Simon, 'The Early Societies for the Reformation of Manners', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 13 (1922) pp. 169.

<sup>428</sup> MRO Sessions Book 551, p. 38; Luttrell, *Brief Relation*, IV, p. 352.

<sup>429</sup> *Account of the Societies ... in England and Ireland* (5th. ed., 1701), p. 96.

*good of their country, will ... find it somewhat difficult to acquit themselves from great impiety.*<sup>430</sup>

To see how the *Proclamation's* intentions were received, one needs a broader perspective than London itself, and evidence exists for the North Riding of Yorkshire which provides an interesting contrast to the more highly charged reformation atmosphere of the Metropolis. In the North Riding as in other far flung districts, JPs did not perceive strong links between themselves and central authority save for the awesome visitations of assize judges on circuit. A royal proclamation, therefore, had to rely for its implementation on more than its high moral tone and implied threats against judicial laxity. The personal proclivities of the local magistrates were crucial in deciding the proclamation's fate. As J. S. Cockburn observed in his study of the North Riding Quarter Sessions around this time, '*although frequent directives and royal proclamations issued from the capital, the justices of each county exercised wide powers of interpretation and execution, and only when such orders coincided with the general policy of the bench do we find quarter sessions ordering constables and parish officials to implement them*'.<sup>431</sup>

Collectively a concern for sound manners was the policy of the North Riding bench and one therefore finds King William's 1698 *Proclamation* entered in the Sessions Books. Enforcement was a very different matter, especially when the *Proclamation* was followed by a new statute embodying its sentiments. Considered as a body, there is little evidence to suggest that the North Riding magistrates were willing to enforce new legislation against offences which traditionally fell within the moral jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts, except where the public peace or the local economy was threatened. Thus one finds collective diligence by the JPs in limiting public pastimes such as gaming and over-frequenting of alehouses because, as was commonly believed, such practices led to fecklessness in common people and tempted them into crime or financial ruin which could result in increased charges on parish resources.<sup>432</sup>

In this way, some reformation of manners objectives coincided with pre-existing policies of county magistrates and were thus pursued coincidentally to their mention in proclamations or statutes promoting reformation of manners per se. But in other matters such as swearing and cursing or profanations of the Sabbath other than by gaming or tippling, there was a noticeable divergence among these same magistrates. This can be clearly seen in the North Riding sessions records and the efforts by individual justices of the peace to enforce the 1695 statute against swearing (6 & 7 Will. III, c.11). The key to enforcement here lay in the co-operation of private individuals with magistrates in supplying informations about offences and the

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<sup>430</sup> Ibid.

<sup>431</sup> J. S. Cockburn, 'The Work of the North Riding Quarter Sessions in the early Eighteenth Century', (unpublished LLM thesis, Leeds University, 1961), p. 33.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid., pp. 52-53. As J. H. Plumb noted, *justices frequently closed ale-houses for no other reason than that it drove custom to the one they owned themselves; Growth of Political Stability* (1969), p. 34.

subsequent response of the magistrate in issuing his warrant to a parochial officer, two areas where human failings often neutralised the statute's intentions.

Cockburn's analysis of conviction certificates under this Act between 1701 and 1709 shows all 164 convictions made by just two justices, John Gibson and William Pennyman. Thereafter, until 1750, only thirteen more convictions were recorded under the Act for the whole county and none of this scant number bears the names of these two JPs.<sup>433</sup> Of course, it could be argued that a zealous justice of the peace, realising the unpopularity of certain legislation, could choose to use summary jurisdiction to convict offenders for swearing and cursing and avoid bringing the case to open sessions. Whatever might be the effect of summary conviction for reformation-type offences, a study of other county bench conviction patterns would probably show the same phenomenon as seen in the North Riding of a handful of zealous JPs responsible for the bulk of the actions taken to enforce reformed manners and respect for religion in the wake of official pronouncements.

As one reformation-minded Surrey magistrate reminded grand jurymen towards the end of William III's reign, they lived in a *very bad, degenerate and atheistical age, wherein there are many that make a mockery at all sin*.<sup>434</sup> His praise for the 1695 Act against swearing stressed the usefulness in law enforcement '*of a good sort of informers ... that get nothing by it but their labour for their pains ... to help bring those vices to our correction and amendment if they can ....*'<sup>435</sup> Though this magistrate praised informers and thought they '*deserved encouragement from all good people*', the impediments to their work already described in previous chapters coupled with widespread disinclination on the part of justices of the peace to use them in detecting and punishing offences such as cursing, swearing and profanations of the Lord's Day means that the gap was never bridged between what seemed to be official confirmations of reformation of manners endeavours and their practical translation into tightened law enforcement at the local level.

In contrast to the relatively uninterested attitude taken by North Riding magistrates, in neighbouring County Durham the Bishop possessed both civil and ecclesiastical authority and was thus in a much better position to promote a positive stance towards reformation of manners. Towards the end of William's reign, the Archdeacon of Durham, Robert Booth, became a keen supporter of the reformation cause and also that espoused by the infant Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. He furthered both with his ecclesiastical position and his place on the county bench. By 1700 Archdeacon Booth had an active correspondence with the leading London reformers and had received a large parcel of reformation printed materials despatched by Sir John Phillips.<sup>436</sup> Although there were no proper reforming

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<sup>433</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>434</sup> Bodl. Rawlinson MS D. 1041, fol. 72 (p. 4).

<sup>435</sup> Ibid., (p. 16).

<sup>436</sup> SPCK Archives, CR2/1, p. 67 (16 March 1700). This is wrongly numbered as 63 in McClure's *Chapter*, and is un-numbered in the file of Original Letters in the SPCK's Library.

societies in the Durham diocese until the summer of 1701, Booth in the interim functioned as a 'one man society' in his dual capacity of cleric and magistrate. Following William's 1698 *Proclamation* he preached before the Mayor and Aldermen of Durham urging them to put the laws into execution against immorality and profaneness and made a personal effort to suppress '*a society of young gentlemen and townsmen, who make it their business to meet together to swear and drink....*'<sup>437</sup> When in Durham City on Sunday evenings, the Archdeacon visited many public houses to see that they did not violate Lord's Day drinking regulations. Sunday nights in that part of the North, he reported, were *constantly dedicated to debauchery*, but he felt his visitations of alehouses had visibly reduced abuses in his area.<sup>438</sup>

A series of pastoral letters and parish visitations by Booth reinforced his concern to stimulate reformation of manners sentiments. By April 1700 he had made substantial progress and the London reformers hoped his example would lessen the prejudice many people felt against churchmen acting as magistrates.<sup>439</sup> In particular Booth was able to draft and steer to fruition an order by the Durham JPs based squarely on King William's Proclamation of 1698 (reissued in December 1699) directed at the constabulary's remissness.<sup>440</sup>

The Durham magistrates' order concentrated on alehouse abuses. Tippling on Sundays -- not just during sermon time as the statutes prohibited -- was banned, as well as unnecessary travel on the Sabbath and the exercise on one's ordinary occupation. Sports and games on Sundays were also banned by the order and, to aid its enforcement, constables were ordered to search every alehouse in the county on Sunday nights and present tipplers and loiterers to the nearest magistrate. In his May 1700 report to leading reformers such as Maynard Colchester, Josiah Woodward, Thomas Bray, and John Chamberlayne, who were also founders of the SPCK, Archdeacon Booth claimed that '*no less than five and twenty persons [were] set in the stocks in one day for profanation of the Sabbath, and in several places even the constables and churchwardens have been made public examples.*'<sup>441</sup>

As a complement to physical reformation, Booth started monthly sacraments and distributed devotional books. His parochial clergy were especially urged to visit

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<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid.

<sup>439</sup> Wanley MSS, p. 48.

<sup>440</sup> Wanley MSS, p. 48. 17 SPCK Archives, CR2/1, no. 96 (3 May 1700): Booth's copy of the Durham magistrates' order is Wanley MSS, pp. 128-129.

<sup>441</sup> SPCK Archives, op. cit. For John Chamberlayne's identification as a director of the reformation movement see J. Nichols ed., *The Epistolary Correspondence ... of ... Francis Atterbury, D. D.* (4 vols. 1783-87), pp. 69-70. This was the son of the author of the well-known series *Angliae Notitiae*. For the contemporary distinction between the SPCK and the societies for reformation, see [John Hooke], *A Short Account of the Several Kinds of Societies, set up of late Years* (1700) and Woodward *Rise and Progress* (4th. ed., 1712, p.67: '*Whilst the Societies for Reformation of Manners pluck up the weeds and prepare the ground, [the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge] sows the good seed.*' See also SPCK Archives, CS3/2, p. 95 (Letter Book No. 19, 25 February 1713).

working people, particularly colliers, at home on Sundays *in order to instil into them principles of piety and devotion* and the content of the King's proclamations and laws against immorality.<sup>442</sup> Booth's bishop, Nathaniel, Lord Crewe, was won over to active support of reformation efforts in the diocese of Durham in the early autumn of 1701. He called the Durham city constables together and charged them *'to enforce the laws in Durham without respect to persons ...'* The city's Mayor also swore before the Bishop *'to take special regard to the punishment of vice and immorality in the town'*. According to Booth, Bishop Crewe compiled a list of public houses to be suppressed as well as evil livers and lax church attenders which the civil authorities promised to act upon by appointing *'only honest and zealous men as constables'*.<sup>443</sup> Archbishop Thomas Tenison was so impressed with Bishop Crewe's initiatives that *'he promised to write a letter ... and thank him for his zeal in promoting a reformation of manners in the city of Durham'*.<sup>444</sup>

By the beginning of 1702 it looked likely that Archdeacon Booth and his Bishop would succeed in establishing a viable reformation movement in Durham City and its environs. The foreman of the county Grand Jury assured Booth that he would present the county's JPs an address urging a judicial concentration on reformation of manners objectives.<sup>445</sup> The London reformers supplied the Archdeacon with the materials for this document.<sup>446</sup> Booth's reasons for requesting it are made plain in his report to the London reformers in early February 1702. He stated that the Durham authorities' promise of the preceding autumn to choose only diligent constables had failed in its objectives and at the previous Quarter Sessions the Grand Jury had presented *'all the constables in the City of Durham, the constable of the market place only excepted, for being negligent and remiss in visiting the public houses in time of divine service and for suffering tippling and drinking on the Lord's Day.'*<sup>447</sup>

It seems that even in Durham where civil and spiritual power were conjoined in Archdeacon Booth and his sympathetic Bishop, the perennial human failings of the inferior officers coupled with the unpopularity amongst most justices of the peace of enforcing laws pertaining to personal habits and religious observance effectively neutralised the campaign for law enforcement based on King William's 1698 *Proclamation* and allied statutes. Certainly the London reformers were aware of the problem and had already considered means of forcing churchwardens to make meaningful reports on moral offences instead of the bland *omnia bene* report usually given to magistrates. In the spring of 1702 a special tract was also composed aimed specifically at remiss parish officers reminding them of the grave obligations of their

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<sup>442</sup> SPCK Archives, CR2/1, no. 96 (3 May 1700).

<sup>443</sup> BL Harleian MS 7190, fol. 11 (SPCK Abstract Letter No. 353, 13 October 1701).

<sup>444</sup> McClure, *Chapter*, p. 150 (21 October 1701).

<sup>445</sup> BL *op. cit.*, fol. 16 (SPCK Abstract Letter No. 371, 3 January 1702).

<sup>446</sup> McClure, *Chapter*, pp. 162, 164 (12, 26 January 1702).

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165 (2 February 1702).

oaths of office.<sup>448</sup> But these were wholly inadequate remedies for the problem of law enforcement at the most basic level.

If there was failure in County Durham where both leading Churchmen and magistrates could give such 'leads from the top' as an encouragement to reformation activities, it is not surprising that in places where local worthies opposed the setting up of reformation societies the whole undertaking was virtually still-born. This was the conclusion of Samuel Wesley commenting on his experiences of promoting reformation work at Epworth in the Isle of Axholme, Lincolnshire. Writing to the SPCK in February 1702, Wesley, formerly co-editor of the pro-reformation *Athenian Mercury* in the heady days of the early 'nineties', bemoaned that he had found '*by sad experience that little or nothing was to be done ... towards the reformation of manners, by ordinary methods, by reason of the negligence of the officers who want courage and are ... notoriously intemperate ...*'. He saw the rising tide of drunkenness as the most serious threat to the morals of his parishioners, despite his preaching and regular reading of the statutes prohibiting this and other immoralities. '*The chief of the town laugh at us, or worse*', he complained, adding that most reformers in his area were '*mean inconsiderable men*' with whom '*those of great wealth and figure*' were loath to associate.<sup>449</sup> This dismal analysis was repeated about reformation activities in Lincoln City itself some ten years later by the clerical magistrate John Disney, author of the much-praised *Essays upon the Execution of the Laws against Immorality and Profaneness*. Disney confessed in a letter to the SPCK in the autumn of 1712 that in Lincoln '*the authoritative methods of reformation have found but little countenance ...*'.<sup>450</sup>

In contrast to Durham, Epworth and Lincoln, reports on the reformation's reception from the southern and western counties tended to be more favourable. Scanty though this evidence is, it is significant that, for instance, in the summer of 1701 the constables of Dover made an agreement with the gentlemen directing the reformation society in the town to '*take some of the members belonging to the society out every Lord's Day, and to divide themselves over the whole city ... and that ... two justices [Alderman Gibbs and Doctor Taylor] go out with them*'. This initiative had other effects and a report by two SPCK agents at this time claimed that swearing, tippling, Sunday trading and barbers shaving on the Lord's Day were '*almost suppressed ... being strictly forbid [sic] by the Mayor*'.<sup>451</sup> Canterbury too had a thriving reformation society at this time, nurtured by the reputations of Alderman Gibbs and Justice Taylor of Dover and the physical support of about forty citizens '*most of them men of substance*'. Similar favourable reports on reformation efforts came at this time from the Kent towns of Wingham, Hearne, Rochester,

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<sup>448</sup> Wanley MSS, pp. 45-46, 63; McClure, *Chapter*, p. 189 (21 May 1702).

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 178-182 (1 February 1702).

<sup>450</sup> Wake Papers, vol. 17. fol 344 (5 November 1712).

<sup>451</sup> Wanley MSS, pp. 158-162 (Report of John Skeate and Thomas Morrison); see also McClure, *Chapter*, p. 141, (7 July 1701).

Sittingbourne and Chatham, all of which were visited by SPCK field agents armed with copious supplies of reformation of manners literature and personal zeal.<sup>452</sup>

Bristol too had a thriving society for reformation of manners at the close of William III's reign. No less than fifty-five Bristol gentlemen attended its inaugural meeting in March 1700 at the home of Sir John Duddleston, a member of the Society of Merchants and Governor of the Corporation of the Poor. Bristol's Mayor, John Batchelor, was a founder of the society and became its chairman shortly after this first meeting. Other prominent merchants and private citizens concurred in the venture, as well as several Bristol constables, and each subscriber paid an annual sum of 10s. to defray the society's printing and other costs. The Bristol Society for Reformation of Manners was inspired both by '*the sense of duty we owe to Almighty God*' and '*in pursuance of His Majesty's several proclamations for discouraging profaneness and debauchery*'.<sup>453</sup>

At first things boded well in Bristol. One of its founders, Anglican parson Arthur Bedford, boasted '*we are very hearty in this city in putting the laws in execution ... the magistrates are very zealous and encourage informers, and they have chosen the best constables that the city do afford ...*'.<sup>454</sup> Bristolian reformers of manners took a wide brief from the outset, being concerned with tippling and other Lord's Day abuses, gaming, and the corruption of the city's young people by '*a great many lewd people that harbour in idle houses*' (i.e. bawds and other 'disorderly' persons).<sup>455</sup>

This concern with prostitution linked by the reformers with single persons without visible employment leading '*an idle and disorderly life*' -- led to reforming constables compiling lists of likely prostitutes for investigation by the magistrates.<sup>456</sup> Alehouses were an obvious haunt of such persons, so searching drinking places was necessary for their detection. Landlords could be difficult in this matter, so much so that Arthur Bedford complained that '*the taverns refuse to open their doors to the constables on the Lord's Day and other unseasonable hours ...*'.<sup>457</sup> Reforming constables in Bristol as elsewhere often encountered judicial obstruction in the form of counter-suits from those they prosecuted. One such officer, Walter Chapman, paid out over £15, later refunded by the gentlemen reformers of Bristol, defending himself in such a suit.<sup>458</sup> Such hazards no doubt contributed to the Society's complaint in early January 1701 that the Bristol '*constables and other inferior officers ... hath not been so diligent in*

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<sup>452</sup> Wanley MSS, op. cit. For opposition to reformation in Deal, see John Laker, *History of Deal* (1917), pp. 247-251.

<sup>453</sup> Bristol MS, fol. 1; see also D. W. R. Bahlman, *The Moral Revolution of 1688* (New Haven, 1957), p. 44.

<sup>454</sup> SPCK Archives, CR2/1, No. 2 (27 November 1699).

<sup>455</sup> Bristol MS, fol. 5.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 7.

<sup>457</sup> McClure, *Chapter*, abstract letter no. 77 (10 April 1700).

<sup>458</sup> Bristol MS, fol. 22.



*their duty in the execution of their office against profaneness and immorality as they ought* ., '.<sup>459</sup>

Difficulties in spurring constables to be diligent law enforcers were a chief cause of the Rev. Bedford's lament in early March 1701 that reformation enthusiasm in Bristol '*visibly decreases*'. He went on in his report to the SPCK in London and to the leading reformers of manners concerned with its work at this time to explain that though Bristol had sufficient zealous magistrates, they found that existing laws were not always sound enough to exclude anomalies and thus allow offenders to escape punishment.<sup>460</sup> The informers in Bristol also aroused hostility, perhaps because the Society made no secret that it paid such persons for their work in detecting Lord's Day offences (30s. 5d. in March 1701 for example).<sup>461</sup> To add to the reformers' problems, Bedford alleged that sometimes public monies were used to fee counsel in countersuits such as the one brought against Constable Chapman. As a final indignity, some cases against immoral and profane persons were snatched from under the noses of Bristol magistrates by the accused petitioning successfully for their removal to King's Bench in London where judges were far less likely to be fired by reformation zeal about offences of a relatively trivial nature committed, by the time the case was finally heard, months in the past.

Though Bedford could justifiably be proud of having contributed to the reduction in the number of alehouses in his Bristol parishes from thirty-seven to eighteen by the autumn of 1701, for the Bristol Society for Reformation of Manners as a body the future was not to be so bright.<sup>462</sup> The foreman of the Bristol Grand Jury at that time was said to be '*no great friend of the Society's*', and from this time the Society's Journal reflects a change of emphasis.<sup>463</sup> Whereas formerly it contained entries dealing with offences against the laws prohibiting lewd and profane practices and plans for better law enforcement, after autumn 1701 the Society's principal preoccupation shifted to the founding of charity schools for Bristol's poor children and the publication of the Rev. Bedford's voluminous writings against the stage as a source of profaneness and corrupt manners among the young. From 1702 onwards, there is nothing to match the zeal against swearers, cursers, drunkards, prostitutes and Sabbath breakers of the first heady months. The Society's Journal entries themselves become less regular after December 1702, with only quarterly as opposed to monthly meetings recorded for 1703, and these cease entirely in April 1705, by which time attendance at meetings was seldom greater than ten members.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> Ibid.

<sup>460</sup> McClure, *Chapter*, un-numbered abstract letter from Arthur Bedford (3 May 1701).

<sup>461</sup> Bristol MS, fol. 27.

<sup>462</sup> McClure, *op. cit.*

<sup>463</sup> BL Harleian MS 7190, fol. 14 (SPCK Abstract Letter No. 365), (24 November 1701).

<sup>464</sup> Bristol MS, fol. 34ff. indicates the changed emphasis; see also Arthur Bedford's *Serious Remonstrance ... against the horrid Blasphemies and Impieties ... in the Playhouses* (Bath, 1719) *the culmination of many years*

The problems experienced by reforming societies of recalcitrant constables and other officers were echoed in numerous grand jury presentments following the proclamations of 1698 and 1699. Typical is the *Middlesex Grand Jury Presentment* of June 1701 which notes '*the great advantages which this county has received from the zeal and diligence of good magistrates putting the laws in execution ... and likewise of those worthy gentlemen and divines, who in this county meet in societies, for the effectual assisting them therein.* Notwithstanding this, however, the grand jurors complained that laws punishing vice and profaneness were still '*very much obstructed, to the great encouragement of offenders, and prejudice of the public*' by '*negligence of constables, headboroughs, and other inferior officers*'.<sup>465</sup>

The City's Grand Jury in its presentment the same month repeated the substance of the Middlesex document. There had been, it said, '*admirable charge of the great advantages which this City hath received from the zeal and industry of those gentlemen and citizens who ... are concerned in societies, for the promoting more effectually the execution of the laws against profaneness and debauchery ...* City grand jurors praised the reformation of manners movement as '*absolutely necessary to our welfare*' and hoped '*this noble design will be an encouragement to others to join with them, for the effecting a more general reformation.*'<sup>466</sup> Given the persistent failings of the City authorities to regulate nuisances such as Bartholomew Fair for more than an occasional season, there must have been many who realised the discrepancy between this exhortation and the realities of trying to achieve a reformation of manners by means of enforcement of existing legislation.

Provincial grand juries were even more blunt about the evil effects of inefficiency at the parish officer level. The Northamptonshire presentment of March 1702 noted King William's proclamations '*to preserve us from vice and immoralities, enemies that have a very fatal influence on a nation and kingdom ...*'. But the grand jurymen complained, that notorious practices were encouraged '*by the negligences [sic] of constables ... and such as keep disorderly public houses, wherein the Lord's Day is so frequently profaned by unnecessary resorts thereunto ...*'.<sup>467</sup> From Southampton the same month came the lament about negligent constables and disorderly alehouses '*wherein not only excessive drinking, and other vicious practices, are promoted, but also an opportunity given to dissolute the profligate fellows ... to entice and allure young persons into wicked confederacies and profanations of the*

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*labour in this area, composed at the behest of the London reformers of manners* (SPCK Archives, CRI/6, No. 4714, 21 January 1716).

<sup>465</sup> *The Presentment of the Gentlemen of the Grand-Jury for the County of Middlesex, on Monday, the 2nd of June, 1701, to the Court of King's Bench* (1701), s.sh.fol.

<sup>466</sup> *The Presentment of the Grand-Jury for the City of London at Justice-Hall in the Old Bailey, the 4th Day of June, 1701* (1701), s.sh.fol.

<sup>467</sup> *The Presentment of the Gentlemen of the Grand-Inquest for the Assizes held at Northampton, for the said County, the 3rd day of March, 1701 [sic] (1702)*, s.sh.fol.

*Lord's Day*'.<sup>468</sup> The same sentiments can be found in presentments around this time from the counties of Nottingham, Monmouth and Derby.<sup>469</sup>

The conclusion is inescapable from this sample of provincial and metropolitan evidence that the apparent conjunction between reformation sentiments seen in royal proclamations and pronouncements from such bodies as grand juries was undermined by the general reluctance of magistrates, and the more serious recalcitrance of parish officers, to enforce laws against offences whose only 'victims' were religion and the souls of the swearers, curlers, drunkards and Sabbath profaners. On the local level there was a failure to make the identification seen in the proclamations and reformation of manners propaganda between such acts and the safety of the nation. Though a flurry of quarter sessions orders attended the issue of William's proclamations against immorality and profaneness in February 1698 and December 1699, and their re-issue virtually unchanged by Queen Anne in March 1702 and February 1703, the net result was little more than a transitory alteration in the local pattern of law enforcement.<sup>470</sup>

Indifference rather than lasting reformation of manners was the predominant reaction, except when, as in the North Riding or at Dover, individual magistrates were stung into action by their personal commitment to reformation objectives. Queen Anne's complaint to Lord Keeper Harcourt in October 1711 can stand as an 'official' verdict on the usefulness of such formal documents as proclamations in furthering reformation of manners. The Queen grieved that

*We have issued several proclamations, strictly enjoining all our officers and ministers to execute with the utmost diligence and vigour those good and wholesome laws which have from time to time been made for the preventing and punishing of vice, profaneness and immorality, and ... to our great grief we are informed that notwithstanding those our repeated commands, those laws have not been duly executed according to our desire and just expectation.*<sup>471</sup>

The utter formality of such royal pronouncements must have been painfully apparent to the reformers of manners when George I issued his *Proclamation for Promoting Piety and Virtue* in early January 1715 at the same time as the *London Gazette* announced the elevation of a notorious rake, sceptic, and election manipulator -- the Junto Whig Thomas Wharton -- to an earldom and high state office as Lord Privy

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<sup>468</sup> *The Presentment of the Gentlemen of the Grand-Inquest for the County of Southampton, at the Assizes held at Winton Castle on the 4<sup>th</sup> Day of March, 1701 [sic], (1702), s.sh.fol.*

<sup>469</sup> *The Presentment of the Grand-Jury for the County of Nottingham, at the Assizes held for the said County the 14th day of March [sic], (1702), s.sh.fol.; The Presentment of the Grand-Jury for the County of Monmouth, at the General Assizes held at Monmouth the 26<sup>th</sup> day of March (1702), s.sh.fol.; The Presentment of the Grand-Jury for the County of Derby, at the Assizes held for the said County, April 14 1702, (1702), s.sh.fol.*

<sup>470</sup> For a list of these orders see Woodward, *An Account of the Progress of the Reformation of Manners in England, Scotland and Ireland*, etc. (11th e d., 1703), pp. 37-39.

<sup>471</sup> B. Brown ed., *The Letters of Queen Anne* (1935, rpr. 1968), p. 351 (Anne to Lord Harcourt, 22 October 1711).

Seal.<sup>472</sup> Perhaps the reformers saw God's judgement in Wharton's death soon afterwards, but this was small consolation for the years of odium and party strife that they had to endure during the preceding years. An examination of their involvement in the 'rage of party' of William's later years and the whole of Queen Anne's reign will occupy a part of the second half of this chapter.

Before examining this aspect, however, it is first necessary to account for the general approval that grand jurymen in London and elsewhere showed for the reformation of manners movement in their presentments towards the close of the 1690s. This was no mere coincidence, and stemmed from the socio-economic similarities between most grand jurymen and the bulk of the membership of the London reforming societies. Chapter Three of this study identified the majority of religious society members in London appearing on a 1694 list of names and occupations of informers associated with reforming societies in the capital.<sup>473</sup> Few of these men styled themselves as "gentlemen" and the vast majority were skilled master craftsmen, independent tradesmen or apprentices to various callings. Most of the group were masters, the remainder being journeymen or apprentices. If such men owned their own premises and paid rates, they voted in Common Council elections. If, as seems likely, some were livery company members in the City, they also possessed the parliamentary franchise.<sup>474</sup> The masters associated with the reforming societies certainly would have been of the same social stratum from which were drawn grand jury members. These were the sorts of men (merchants, tradesmen and craftsmen) whom Gregory King's 1688 economic analysis of the national income showed generating about 16% of England's wealth.<sup>475</sup> Serving on grand juries in London and the counties, such men could be expected to sympathise with efforts to use the existing laws to enforce temperance, propriety and respect for authority and religion. These were virtues of obvious benefit to independent small men, especially those married with children and in charge of apprentices and journeymen. Even the London publican and satirist, Edward Ward, himself no friend of the reformers of manners, realised the social consequences of failing to inculcate good manners into the young and impressionable. His *London Spy* commented on an elaborate pageant '*chiefly dedicated to the London apprentices, at the charge of the Society for Reformation*' containing tableaux depicting '*the sad calamities that attend the conversation of lewd women, viz. pox, poverty, shame and the gallows*'.<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> *London Gazette*, 5 January 1715.

<sup>473</sup> Vide supra p. 52ff.

<sup>474</sup> For the composition of the electorate see W. A. Speck, *Tory and Whig: The Struggle in the Constituencies, 1701-1715* (1970), chapter 2.

<sup>475</sup> Computed from King's table by David Cressy, 'Describing the Social Order of Elizabethan and Stuart England', *Literature and History*, no. 3 (1976). p. 38.

<sup>476</sup> *The London Spy* (1698; 4th ed., 1709), part XII, p. 296. Ward was sarcastic about the bad examples in the lives of the great and powerful: '*when the great fish break the net, the little ones will get out at the rent. Though arguing for virtue, and good manners, is highly to be commended, yet the little reformation we find shows, that hitherto it has signified little or nothing*', See *Labour in Vain: or, what Signifies Little or Nothing* (1700) in *Harleian Miscellany*, VI, p. 351.

While it is undeniable that certain influential reformers of manners in London were instrumental in procuring from the King and Parliament various statements pointing in the general direction of the reformation movement's objectives, a distinction must be made between urging reformation through the increased effectiveness of existing law enforcement machinery, and condoning the ad hoc activities of reforming societies with their panoply of informers, warrant registers and conviction lists and deluge of propaganda to achieve the same end. Reading between their resounding phrases, all proclamations and statutes supporting the idea of reformed manners from Queen Mary's letter to the Middlesex JPs in 1691 onwards fell into the first category and could only be seen as commendations of the reformers' activities by those already sympathetic with their particular approach to objectives which had a universal appeal to those in authority. If one looks behind these statements at attitudes circulating in Whitehall about the reformers of manners in 1698, the year that saw the achievement of their supposed endorsement by authority in the form of King William's *Proclamation against Immorality and Profaneness* and the statute and parliamentary address on the same subject, one finds a climate that is very different from the approval that one might have expected.

In the summer of 1698, quite unknown to the gentlemen of the First Society for Reformation of Manners who were still buoyed up by their successes of a few months earlier, Secretary of State James Vernon was nosing out information to verify his suspicions that the reforming societies spreading from London around the country posed a threat to the established order. These doubts on the ultimate intentions of the reformers of manners were shared, at least privately, by the King, Lord Chancellor Somers, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Tenison. The spectre haunting Secretary Vernon's thoughts was that of a revived Puritanism, in particular its tendency to factionalism which had led to the 'rule of the Saints'.<sup>477</sup> It was still fresh in the memories of England's rulers how the quest after precision in religious and moral matters had led to criticisms of the established order and its identification with Antichrist itself. Since both Anglicans and Nonconformists were known to be associated in the reformation movement and its societies, Archbishop Tenison feared the genesis of sentiments undermining the moral authority of the Established Church. Lord Somers was more practical and expressed the view that the reformers aimed at '*discrediting the administration, which they represent as atheistical, and designing to drive Christianity out of the world*'.<sup>478</sup>

Though imaginary, the fears such men as Vernon, Tenison and Somers had about the growth and possible exploitation of the reformation movement acquired extra seriousness given King William's lack of an heir of his own body and the uncertainties surrounding the succession, to say nothing of the papist threat (1696 saw a Jacobite assassination plot) which might see in the reformation movement a way to stoke up criticism of the government for not being firm enough in guarding

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<sup>477</sup> *Vernon Letters*, II, pp. 128-130 (James Vernon to Duke of Shrewsbury, 16 July 1698).

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*

England's moral health. By the later 1690s, then, the reformation of manners movement was already embroiled in political matters even though its leaders were as yet unaware of the sort of suspicions their activities were arousing. If there had existed a harmony between the movement and the objectives of the government's proclamations and statutes, as the reformers of manners certainly believed, then surely suspicions such as Secretary Vernon's could not have arisen because England's rulers would have had ample first-hand knowledge that the reformation movement was the very opposite of a subversive tendency likely to attract '*discontented churchmen or discarded statesmen*'.<sup>479</sup>

One further aspect of the evidence arguing against a harmony of interests between reformers of manners and central government in the late 'nineties is the remarkable ignorance Secretary Vernon and other officials displayed about the origins and history of the London societies for reformation of manners. Though they had been established in the capital for almost eight years when Vernon reported on them to the Duke of Shrewsbury, he had no first-hand knowledge of them or any of their members though, as has been seen, gentlemen of rank and fortune were among them. Similarly, the Secretary of State seems to have had no knowledge of the clash between the reformers and the Commissioners of the Great Seal in 1691, though surely Lord Somers, then Chancellor and formerly Lord Keeper after the suppression of the Commissioners, could have informed him of the details. As it was, Secretary Vernon had to rely on the information of an otherwise anonymous dissenting minister, one "Mr. Owen", himself said to be a reformer of manners, for his picture of the movement in London in the summer of 1698.

What Vernon learned from "Mr. Owen" was that about fifty to sixty gentlemen who wished to remain anonymous directed the reformation movement in London, but that the capital's magistrates were far from forthright in their support and only about three or four were openly zealous to promote its objectives and methods. This was enough for King William to order Vernon to have the reformers infiltrated so that their activities could be closely monitored and checked if they developed into a dangerous faction. Further investigations convinced Secretary Vernon that the reformers themselves were more naive than dangerous, but that their zeal could be perverted by other hands, should discontented elements gain influence among them, into a real threat to stability. As he concluded his observations to the Duke of Shrewsbury in July 1698:

*I find these reformers are people of all persuasions, as well Churchmen as Dissenters, so that it is not the interest of any particular sect they would promote, but the general good of mankind, by introducing a conformity of manners and a primitive purity. This is a pretty temper to be worked upon if designing persons get amongst them, and if they grow to any strength.*

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<sup>479</sup> Ibid.

*I know not what models they have for establishing saintship. I am inclined to be of the opinion that this may be a way to set up hypocrisy, but will not much advance real honesty or virtue, and when men have run through the circle of severities that are almost inseparable from a sudden reformation, they will return to a natural state of being, as good or as bad as they please.*<sup>480</sup>

Perhaps it could be argued that Secretary Vernon was too tainted with political cynicism to appreciate fully the selfless motives of the reformers of manners and their objectives of national salvation. However, one must not discount his fears that the reformation's aims could be channelled into party political service and, at the worst, produce a situation similar to that preceding the Civil War. The last thing the ministers of William III wished to do was to permit the growth of any issue around which opponents could rally. Following the Peace of Ryswick in 1697, the Junto Whigs had seen their former Court power slip into Country Party hands. With such parliamentary country gentlemen as the brothers Harley and Sir John Phillips involved in the reformation of manners movement and its well-known connections with Dissent, and even Socinianism in the person of Thomas Firman, this alone would have been enough to stoke Secretary Vernon's imagination without the added ingredients of memories of the 'many headed monster' of Puritanism and the exiled Stuarts waiting for any opportunity to overturn the social order based on the Revolution of 1688.<sup>481</sup>

Other comments on the aims of the reformation movement tended to bolster Secretary Vernon's analysis, especially his fear that concern for outward reformation would breed hypocrisy or fanaticism and provide a cover for social subversion. Charles Gildon in his *History of the Athenian Society*, had already claimed in 1693 that neither the reformers of manners, nor William and Mary's government for that matter, ever intended by their efforts to reform '*all degrees, sects, and principles, for that is a moral impossibility*'.<sup>482</sup> Instead, argued Gildon, the reformation of manners movement was but a scheme to cow the impious with the penalties of the laws so that '*the pious would not meet with such frequent and open objects of debauchery and profaneness*'. Reformed manners in this analysis had little to do with ultimate questions of England's survival as God's favoured nation in the face of foreign threats and domestic instability and sprang rather from the comparatively trivial desire of the morally-minded not to be affronted by deviant behaviour. As Gildon phrased it, '*it is as much comfort to a good man as to a man of sense, to have a fool silenced by authority ...*'<sup>483</sup> On the question of hypocrisy arising from attempts to reform people's manners, Gildon was quite accepting, since '*hypocrisy itself is better than scandal*' and it was preferable to have a private vice such as hypocrisy which

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<sup>480</sup> *Vernon Letters*, II, p. 133 (Vernon to Shrewsbury, 21 July 1698).

<sup>481</sup> For the political climate after Ryswick see Rubini, *Court and Country*, (1968), chap. 6.

<sup>482</sup> Originally pseudonymous, the 1693 *History* was reprinted in *Athenian Oracle* (3rd. ed., 1728), IV, p. 37ff. Gildon was close to John Dunton, Samuel Wesley and the other 'Athenians' supporting the early reformation movement.

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

*'by borrowing the fact and outward form of virtue, by consequence makes some atonement for its private ills, by giving a (seeming at least) good example'.<sup>484</sup>*

At their most candid several reformation of manners preachers admitted as much in their published sermons, though officially the reformation's leaders feared insincere reformation for just this reason and strove in their apologies to prevent its growth. Even that stalwart reformer and scourge of vice the Rev. Thomas Bray was prepared to moderate his condemnations of hypocritical reformation when instructing parochial clergy on the didactic power of outward examples in a deferential and hierarchical society. For Bray the parish ministers constituted the front line in the battle against immorality and religious laxity and many of his projects aimed at providing them with the models of professional competence and personal conduct appropriate to their social roles. He reminded his clerical audience in *Biblioteca Parochialis* that the *'great abatement of those insults, indignities and opprobrious words, which we of the clergy have formerly been often attacked with, even in the very streets, from atheists and libertines, must be ... acknowledged to be the effect of the endeavours and restraints that the gentlemen concerned in reformation of manners have put upon the impious, dissolute and debauched'.<sup>485</sup>* It was natural to his way of thinking that the clergy should take an active role in putting the laws in execution against immoralities and at the same time present their parishioners with examples of virtue and piety in their own lives. But, he confided. *'assure yourselves that it were much more beneficial for the edification of your flock that you were hypocritical, than licentious ... for the hypocrite ... may notwithstanding save others, though himself be reprobate ... and he honours religion even in counterfeiting it, which must needs alleviate his condemnation.'*<sup>486</sup> Even satirists of the reformers of manners such as Defoe and Edward Ward were agreed on the power of good examples, however derived. The possibilities of hypocrisy appeared not to matter at all to the practically-minded grand jurymen of Deal in Kent who responded to one of Queen Anne's repetitious proclamations against vice and profaneness by assuring her that in their borough vicious persons were being punished, *'whereby good men are encouraged and evil ones visibly reformed, at least in outward appearance ...'*<sup>487</sup>

### The Anglican Leadership

A primary way in which the reformation of manners movement was viewed by contemporaries in Queen Anne's time was from the vantage point of increasingly vociferous party struggles. Like so many issues of the time, these were often couched in the language of 'church issues' and revolved, at least ostensibly, around the maintenance of the ecclesiastical policy of the Church of England in particular and the nation's religious health in general. As events were to prove, when the cry was *Nolumus leges Angliae mutari* [sic: "We do not want the laws of England to be

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<sup>484</sup> Ibid.

<sup>485</sup> Thomas Bray, *Bibliotheca Parochialis* (2nd ed., 1707) p. 24.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid., p 23.

<sup>487</sup> *Flying Post* (29 January -1 February 1704); see also *The Gloucestershire Address* (1710).



altered"] and the issue affected the nation's religious constitution, such as the Comprehension or Occasional Conformity issues, there was no shortage of Anglican clergymen and devout Tory country gentlemen to rally in support of the 'Church Party'. It must not be forgotten, of course, that the Established Church then exercised extensive control over individual lives. Ecclesiastical jurisdiction governed not only birth, marriage and death, but also directly affected office-holders and prospective school teachers, midwives and physicians to whom the withholding of an episcopal licence on grounds of heresy or immorality could be disastrous. Social tendencies after 1688, however, increasingly exposed the real shortcomings of this theoretically pervasive spiritual power. One can find a host of schemes ranging from revived rural deaneries and the institution of parochial libraries to the renewal of ecclesiastical courts, especially the Archdeacon's, offered as remedies to the problem. To High Church Anglicans concerned with the defence of their Church's traditional moral authority, the most glaring breach in the religious order in England after 1688 contributing to the growth of heterodoxy and lax religious observance was the Toleration Act. Interpreted in practice far more liberally than its authors ever intended, this limited grant of freedom to licensed dissenting meeting places was seen by many as an indulgence where church-going was concerned.<sup>488</sup> As Archdeacon Humphrey Prideaux of Norwich complained:

*a liberty being granted, more lay hold of it to separate from all manner of worship ... than go to the [meeting houses]; and although the Act allows no such liberty, the people understand it so ...[and] ... no church-warden or constable will present any for not going to church, though they go nowhere else but to the alehouse ....*<sup>489</sup>

This situation was compounded, especially in High Church eyes, by the decayed state of many ecclesiastical courts and the general disrepute of many of their officers. As the moderate Bishop of Coventry and Litchfield, William Lloyd, complained about his own diocese, *'I have many more complaints against the ecclesiastical courts which here as well as almost everywhere else, are come to be a public nuisance through the corruption of their officers'*.<sup>490</sup>

From the time James II suspended the penal laws in 1687, a steady dropping away is observable in the volume of cases brought before church courts for Sunday non-churchgoing and for many offences committed by the laity concerned with manners and morals.<sup>491</sup> This deterioration was perpetuated by the failure of the post-1688 settlement to re-establish uniformity of religion and the moral primacy of the Anglican

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<sup>488</sup> Henry Horwitz, *Revolution Politics* (Cambridge, 1968), chap. 6 and R. Thomas, 'Comprehension and Indulgence' in *From Uniformity to Unity, 1662-1692*, ed. O. Chadwick and G. Nuttall (1962) describe contemporary views of the legislation.

<sup>489</sup> *Letters of Humphrey Prideaux to John Ellis, 1674-1722*, ed. E. M. Thompson (1875), p. 154.

<sup>490</sup> Dr. Williams's Library, Stillingfleet MS 201.38, fols. 63-68 (Lloyd to Stillingfleet, 13 November 1693); see also *ibid.*, fol. 25 (Humphrey Prideaux to same, 9 April 1697).

<sup>491</sup> G. V. Bennett, 'Conflict in the Church' in Holmes ed., *Britain after the Glorious Revolution* (1969), p. 159.

clergy. The sternly logical protest of the Non-jurors further undermined spiritual institutions to the extent that with the expiry of the Licensing Act in 1695, church authorities were virtually powerless to stem the rising tide of cheap sceptical literature against 'priestcraft' pouring from the presses in London and other towns. Reformers of manners were certainly not alone in expressing their concern for what they perceived as a growth of irreligious and licentious living. But efforts which sought to halt this through reforms in ecclesiastical jurisdiction were signal failures in the 1690s.<sup>492</sup> In this climate it is wholly understandable that High Churchmen who feared '*the swelling of the meeting house*' in the wake of Toleration and all that implied for the political constitution as well as the traditional role of the Anglican Church and its clergy, should support efforts aimed at the revival of spiritual control over the manners of the community.<sup>493</sup> One can see this clearly in many of the initiatives taken in the Lower House of Convocation against heresy and blasphemy and, on a more practical level, the wretched economic circumstances of many parish clergy whose '*scandalous poverty*,' observed Charles Davenant in 1704, bred '*very ill effects*'.<sup>494</sup>

The fact of lax moral authority was agreed by reformers of manners and their critics. It was the issue of how to overcome the problem that was contentious. Ironically, it was William Wake, certainly no ally of the majority of parochial clergy in the Lower House of Convocation, who identified the dilemma inherent in the involvement of secular power in moral jurisdiction. Wrestling with possible improvements that could be gained from Parliament where a defendant's contumacy before an ecclesiastical judge was concerned, Bishop Wake concluded that a new statute would ultimately harm spiritual authority since '*if a new statute should be made, many doubts will probably arise thereupon, and the temporal judge being the sole interpreter of that statute, the ecclesiastical judge will yet be in more danger of being cramped in his proceedings*'.<sup>495</sup> To the defenders of Anglican rights to regulate moral behaviour, the implications of the growth of mixed reforming societies relying on more effective secular execution of existing statute laws were clear. High Churchmen had to resist such tendencies if they were ever to achieve a return to a unified system of authority with the Church firmly in control of the moral sphere so persuasively drawn by Atterbury's *Letter to a Convocation-Man* (1697). With the High Church ground marked out in the historical claims of ecclesiastical moral authority, the stage was set by 1700, when the Junto ministry collapsed and High Church Tories led by

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<sup>492</sup> A range of proposals can be found in Sharp Papers, Box 4, Bundle 0, nos. 16-18 and Bundle G. no. 29, the latter being a draft Act that passed the Lords in 1695 but was laid aside by the Commons (see *Commons Journal*, XI, pp. 526ff).

<sup>493</sup> Sharp Papers, Box 4, Bundle C. no 9 (Nathaniel Drake of Sheffield to Sharp, 19 July 1700). For the fear that the involvement of reformation of manners with secular politics would alienate '*the main bulk of the people and especially the landed men*' see *ibid.*, Bundle L, no. 23 the draft 'Hints and Remarks on Mr. Disney's Book', n.d. This may refer the Lincoln clerical magistrate John Disney's *An Essay upon the Execution of the Laws against Immorality and Profaneness* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1710, but it is impossible to be precise.

<sup>494</sup> Bodl. Add MS 773, fol. 17, quoted by Bennett, *op. cit.* p. 164.

<sup>495</sup> Wake Papers, vol. 18, fol. 337.

Rochester and his allies gained office, for a struggle between parties over 'church issues' in which the significance of the movement for reformation of manners was certain to find a place.

No contending alignment in Queen Anne's time, especially the High Church Tory following, was prepared to accept at face value the simplistic and altruistic programme of a movement composed both of Churchmen and Dissenters, the latter of varying extremes; philanthropic country squires and monied men from the City; and politicians of rather mixed Whig and Tory sympathies but sharing a general 'country' hue.<sup>496</sup> There were two points in particular which were very objectionable to those moving towards a High Church Tory orientation: the reformation movement's intimate link with Dissenters and its advocacy of civil power to achieve social control, when this was the traditional preserve of spiritual jurisdiction. To those urging, as Sacheverell did in his Oxford sermon in 1702, the waving of '*the bloody flag and banner of defiance*' in the face of threats to the Anglican Church's position, it was probably the intermingling of Dissenters with Churchmen in reformation of manners work that was most infuriating.

The political and economic power of Dissent was increasing as the number of its adherents grew in London and its out-parishes and almost every major provincial centre after 1700.<sup>497</sup> To those supporting the divinely sanctioned primacy of the Anglican Church in the nation's religious order, there could be no dilution of this position without the tacit endorsement of schism in England's fabric of belief. In a political sense, this carried over into opposing the inclusion of Dissenters qualifying by occasional conformity for election to borough corporations and hence in some places control over parliamentary seats, and the toleration of breeding grounds for yet more nonconformist leaders in the dissenting academies.<sup>498</sup>

That reformation pulpits were often in the provinces shared by Anglican and Nonconformist preachers was a further indication of the 'schismatic' nature of the movement. Repeated frustrations suffered by the High Church alliance in its attempts to overturn occasional conformity, culminating in the decimation of the Tory ministry in 1704-05 after the defeat of the 'Tack' and the inauguration of a period of Whig control favourable to yet more dissenting encroachments, only fanned the fury of High Church critics of the reformation movement such as Henry Sacheverell,

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<sup>496</sup> The judgement of J. Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule and Religion: The Age of Enlightenment in England, 1660-1750* (1976) p. 196, that the reformation movement was 'Whig-inspired' is altogether too glib. But it is undeniable that leading reformers were intimate with Whig City men such as Sir Gilbert Heathcote MP and Governor of the Bank of England, the '*uncrowned king of the Whig monied interest*' (Holmes, *Trial*, p. 72). London's Court of Aldermen granted the principal Society for Reformation two freedoms each year from 1695 until 1713 allowing two of its members to vote in local elections (City of London Record Office, Repertory 117, fols. 275-277).

<sup>497</sup> There were some 500,000 nonconformists in England and Wales by 1714, about one-fifth of them in London, and some provincial towns such as Norwich, Bristol, Birmingham and Exeter had a higher proportion of Dissenters than the capital; Holmes, *Religion and Party in late Stuart England* (1975), p. 14.

<sup>498</sup> See the discussion at length in G. V. Bennett, *The Tory Crisis in Church and State, 1688-1730* (Oxford, 1975).

Francis Atterbury and Charles Leslie and their attacks on the reformation movement reflect the intensity of their feelings. As a prelude to examining this 'rage of party' in Queen Anne's reign, it will be necessary to outline the acceptance of the reformation movement and its objectives and methods by leading Anglican divines during the 1690s, for there is a discrepancy between the attitudes they really held and the support that the reformation's apologists often claimed.

The key to much clerical involvement with the idea of reformation of manners can be found in John Evelyn's diary entry for 23 February 1690. Referring to King William's recent letter to Bishop Compton of London for communication throughout the archdioceses of Canterbury and York (13 February 1690), Evelyn notes *'the impudence of both sexes, being now become so great and universal, persons of all ranks keeping their courtesans so publicly, that the King had lately directed a letter to the bishops to order their clergy to preach against sin, swearing, etc. and to put the laws ecclesiastical in execution without any indulgence'*.<sup>499</sup> The key word here is 'ecclesiastical', since there was no hint in William's letter that secular power, such as later advocated by the reformers of manners, was especially suited for the task compared with the traditional spiritual authority of the Church of England in moral matters. That church leaders should support a reformation of manners achieved by reinvigorated ecclesiastical means (ranging from re-instituted rural deans to reformed church courts to a better educated and exemplary parish clergy) was not in question among Churchmen.<sup>500</sup> What did worry some of them, and this point was often obscured by the reformers of manners, was the achievement of this objective by what in their eyes was the novel employment of civil power and its panoply of justices of the peace, informers, constables and, above all, ad hoc societies to encourage secular efficiency against vice and profaneness. It is indicative of this distinction that in the several conferences Bishop Compton had with his London clergy in future years upon these and similar royal injunctions to achieve a reformation of manners, the lay societies for reformation and the use of secular power to achieve these ends were never mentioned.<sup>501</sup>

The attitudes towards the reformation movement taken by the two Archbishops, Tenison of Canterbury and Sharp of York, deserve some explanation as well. It has been asserted that Tenison *'supported wholeheartedly the societies for the reformation of manners which sprang up ... with the object of encouraging people to*

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<sup>499</sup> E. S. de Beer ed., *The Diary of John Evelyn*, V, (1690-1706), 23 February 1690. For the circulation of the letter in the dioceses of London and Salisbury see Guildhall Broadside 19.26 and Bodl. Add. MS D.23, fols. 85-86.

<sup>500</sup> Figures as diverse as Edward Stillingfleet and Francis Atterbury could agree on this point. See 'Proposals towards the Reviving Discipline among the Clergy according to our ancient Constitution', (n.d.) in Stillingfleet MSS 201.39, fols. 24 a-b to 28, in Dr. Williams's Library, London. The idea of revived rural deans and chapters was very popular with High Churchmen.

<sup>501</sup> Though Compton did explain *'how to prevail with our dissenting brethren to join heartily with us in discouraging loose and profane persons'* in *The Bishop of London's Eighth Letter to his Clergy, upon a Conference how they ought to behave themselves under the Toleration* (March 1692), he never ventured outside the clerical sphere.

*inform on those who broke the law'.<sup>502</sup> Certainly Tenison received numerous royal directions about encouraging a reformation of manners, but by the means traditionally employed by the ecclesiastical authorities.<sup>503</sup> Tenison in his turn had quite positive means to recommend to his clergy on the achievement of a general reformation of manners. But encouragement of large societies composed chiefly of laymen of mixed religious persuasions was certainly not among these means. Tenison was certainly aware of 'the visible success of that noble zeal wherewith so many about the great cities ... do promote true piety, and a reformation of manners', but he wished his clergy to do the same or better for themselves, not to merge into an effort already underway. As he wrote to the bishops of his province on 4 April 1699:*

*It were to be wished, that the clergy of every neighbourhood would agree upon frequent meetings, to consult for the good of religion in general ... by what methods any evil custom may most easily be broken; how a sinner may be most effectually reclaimed; and (in general) how each of them may contribute most to the advancement of religion.<sup>504</sup>*

Where the civil authorities were concerned, Tenison took a similarly independent line that was jealous of clerical power. Churchwardens were to be invited to these clergy meetings and any immoralities they reported were to be dealt with first by ecclesiastical censures. If these failed, then the civil magistrate could be applied to for the implementation of penalties prescribed by statutes. But only the clergy should make this approach since they '*may best be supposed to understand the necessity of having recourse to the civil magistrate*'. Similarly, civil power was plainly a last recourse, not the first one, and should only be used to reform immorality '*when all other methods have been tried to little or no effect*'.<sup>505</sup> Clearly Tenison wished the impetus for a reformation campaign to come from the clergy and his anxiety at the burgeoning lay-directed movement centres in London is apparent from his equivocations surrounding the draft of their substantial propaganda piece, *Account of the Societies for Reformation of Manners in London and Westminster*, which was circulating among other bishops early in 1699.

The source for Tenison's objections to this project is Edward Fowler, Bishop of Gloucester and a fervent supporter of the reformation movement, whose *Vindication*

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<sup>502</sup> Edward Carpenter, *Thomas Tenison, Archbishop of Canterbury, his Life and Times* (1948), p. 287.

<sup>503</sup> *The King's Injunctions to the Archbishops of this realm* (15 February 1694) included the order '*that you will, without favour or partial affection, study to suppress impiety and vice, and to reform all disorders....*' in Edward Cardwell, *Documentary Annals of the Reformed Church*, II, p. 333. Tenison's *Circular Letter to the clergy of the Archdiocese of Canterbury* is *ibid.*, pp. 334-338.

<sup>504</sup> *His Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury's letter to the Right Reverend the Lords Bishops of his Province* (4 April 1699), heading IV, in Cardwell, *op. cit.*, pp. 347-352.

<sup>505</sup> *Ibid.* For a clergy society interested in reformation of manners founded in Lincolnshire in April 1700 acknowledging Tenison's lead see 'An Account of a Society of some of the Clergy and Others in Lincolnshire, for the Promoting Christian Knowledge' in Wanley MSS, pp. 145-153. As Samuel Wesley and John Disney both reported, such attempts failed.

*of an Undertaking of Certain Gentlemen in Order to the Suppressing of Debauchery and Profaneness* (1692) 'did the societies mighty service' in England and encouraged Narcissus March, Archbishop of Dublin, to become the patron of the reforming society forming there.<sup>506</sup> In his efforts to secure the approbation of Archbishop Sharp of York to the endorsement to be published at the beginning of the *Account* of the societies in the capital, Bishop Fowler had to explain why Tenison was not involved in the project. The reason stemmed from the primate's offer of nothing more substantial than platitudes during at least the three previous years when he had been approached by the gentlemen directing the reformation campaign. To Fowler and like-minded bishops, such as Nicholas Stratford of Chester, this dithering was scandalous. As Fowler protested to Sharp,

*our whole bench have never done the fortieth part of that service and honour to our Church, that these Church of England laymen have done. And it hath grieved me to see how much gladness they have expressed, and how grateful they are, whenever they find any of us giving them encouragement, as if they had been managing only their own interest; or, we were not so much concerned as they in reformation work; whereas we are, I need not say, far more concerned.*<sup>507</sup>

Given Tenison's lukewarmness, and the opposition that the reformers had experienced from Bishop Gilbert Burnet when they canvassed his support for the 1695 *Act against Swearing*, the London reformers decided not to approach all the bishops for their endorsements.<sup>508</sup> Though not directly involved, Tenison tried to neuter the project by issuing his own pastoral letter on 4 April 1699 (largely written by Burnet) making references to reformed manners but carefully avoiding any commitment to the reformation movement itself.<sup>509</sup> The Archbishop of Canterbury confessed as much in a letter to Archbishop Sharp three days afterwards. As he explained :

*some of the societies here, of the better sort, out of a good zeal, but I thought not enough governed by prudence, had prepared a book of some sheets about starting reformation by societies and intended to get the bishops hands to it, in the quality of approvers, and to send copies at the Easter visitations all over England.*

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<sup>506</sup> Sharp Papers, Box 3, Bundle P, no. 6 (Fowler to Sharp, 25 March 1699).

<sup>507</sup> Sharp Papers, Box 4, Bundle L, no. 87 (Fowler to Sharp, 6 April 1699).

<sup>508</sup> For Gilbert Burnet's opposition and the support the project gained from Lord President Pembroke see Sharp Papers, Box 3, Bundle L, no 88 (Fowler to Sharp, 18 April 1699).

<sup>509</sup> As Fowler alleged '*His Grace, notwithstanding the first lines of his letter, had I dare say, never once thought of this matter but merely to put off the Bishop of Ely*', *ibid*.

*I proposed the stopping of hands and the doing something ourselves, it being, I thought, most absurd for the college of bishops to be led in such a manner. This was agreed to, and hence came this letter ....*<sup>510</sup>

This is the explanation for the 1699 *Account of the Societies for Reformation of Manners in London and Westminster* bearing only the endorsements of firm episcopal supporters such as Fowler and Stratford, Simon Patrick of Ely, Richard Kidder of Bath and Wells, and John Williams of Chichester, among the total of nine bishops agreeing to the project. William Lloyd of Litchfield and Coventry wanted to sign, but seeing that he was so recently promoted to the diocese of Worcester after Edward Stillingfleet's death (who would also have signed but for his final illness) Lloyd thought it best not to offend Archbishop Tenison and begged off.<sup>511</sup>

Bishop Edward Fowler summed up the primate's indifference to the reformation endeavours with the remark to Sharp that '*I would not for twice his revenues that my name should run so low as his, for a lukewarm heavy man*' and concluded his argument to the reluctant Sharp with the claim that acts of Parliament and ecclesiastical canons were useless '*where there's no care to have them put in rigorous execution, as I am confident they will never be, where our London Society [for Reformation of Manners] has no influence*'.<sup>512</sup>

Such frankness did not persuade Archbishop Sharp to abandon his initial doubts over the 1699 *Account ... London and Westminster*, and he continued to withhold his endorsement of the book and the reformation movement in general. Writing to Archdeacon William Nicolson of Carlisle about the matter some months later, Archbishop Sharp gave a succinct version of his objections:

*I myself have always been averse to such sort of confederacies or combinations, whether of clergy or others, as are now on foot everywhere; whether they be those of the religious societies, or those of a later standing which go under the name of societies for reformation; as doubting whether they be legal in themselves (though with submission I think it may bear a dispute whether they come under those conventicles which are forbidden in the 12th and 73rd Canons) and apprehending likewise that sometime or other we may feel ill consequences from them. And for these reasons I refused my subscription the last year to that book which was written for the recommending these societies, though I was earnestly by letters from two of the bishops [ie Fowler and Stratford] pressed to join my hand with theirs.*

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<sup>510</sup> Sharp Papers, Box 4, Bundle L, no. 58 (Tenison to Sharp, 7 April 1699).

<sup>511</sup> For Edward Stillingfleet's approval see Sharp Papers, Box 3, Bundle P, no. 6 (Fowler to Sharp, 25 March 1699); for William Lloyd's dilemma see *ibid.*, Box 3, Bundle L, no. 88 (same to same, 18 April 1699). See also H. Tindal Hart, *William Lloyd, 1627-1717* (1952), pp. 193, 248 and D. Robertson ed., *The Diary of Francis Evans* (Lloyd's chaplain) (Oxford, 1903), p. 15ff.

<sup>512</sup> Sharp Papers, *op. cit.*

*The truth is, the societies of London have been so industrious in spreading their books, and the success they have had (as they say) in this way has made such a noise everywhere, that the whole nation almost hath taken the alarm. And so eagerly in many places are the minds of people set upon these new methods, that it may justly be doubted whether it be in the bishop's power to stifle or suppress these societies, though he should use his utmost endeavours to do it.*

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*But as for the societies for reformation that are now on foot in several places, they are new things, and for which there is no foundation in our laws and canons, and we do not know what consequences they may in time produce, and therefore I dare not be the author or adviser to anyone either clergyman or layman, to embark in these projects.*<sup>513</sup>

Where the reformation movement appeared closer to home, Archbishop Sharp also took a discouraging position towards it. Though not openly opposed to Dissenters, Sharp disliked the idea of mixed reforming societies which, in his diocese, tended to be dominated by zealous Nonconformists who, he feared, might in time exploit their advantage to reduce the moral authority and social status of the Anglican clergy.<sup>514</sup> Similarly, mixed reformation societies, in Sharp's view, could play into the hands of secular magistrates who would not be slow to exploit their increased control in an area of moral regulation which had formerly been the preserve of the Church.<sup>515</sup>

Purely Anglican reforming societies, preferably led by clergymen, would have been preferable to Sharp given the growth of Dissent in towns such as Nottingham, Leeds, Sheffield, Hull and Chester where mixed reforming societies sprang up under the combined nurture of the London reformers and the interest of local, mainly dissenting, citizens and ministers.<sup>516</sup> In all of this, Sharp was echoing the fears of other diocesans that large mixed societies might attract the attention of the government as unlicensed conventicles and possible breeding groups for faction.<sup>517</sup> The last thing Anglican leaders wished to do was to endorse any schemes which might in time alienate ministerial support from the cause of the Established Church.

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<sup>513</sup> Sharp Papers, Box 4, Bundle R, no. 27 (Sharp to Nicolson, 27 February 1700).

<sup>514</sup> Sharp Papers, Box 3, Bundle P, nos. 3 and 4 concerning the reformation society at Nottingham in 1698 and Box 4, Bundle R, no. 38 (Sharp to T. Caryll [sic], Vicar of Nottingham, 2 February 1698).

<sup>515</sup> Even reformation sympathisers such as Edmund Gibson shared this fear, see the preface to his *Codex Juris Ecclesiastici Anglicani* (1713), where he deplores the increase of statute laws prohibiting immoralities since it robbed the spiritual power of jurisdiction and gratified temporal authority with a role that was not properly its own.

<sup>516</sup> Thomas Sharp, *The Life of John Sharp, Archbishop of York* (1825), I, p. 185 using the Archbishop's now lost diary. For the spread of reforming societies in the archdiocese see Sharp Papers, Box 3, Bundle P, nos. 2, 8, 9, 14, 18-20. The Chester reforming society, a mixed group, was promoted by Bishop Stratford and his Dean Lawrence Fogg: see William Tong, *The Life and Death of Matthew Henry* (1716), p. 178ff.

<sup>517</sup> Sharp Papers, Box 3, Bundle P, no. 7: 'Concerning the Assemblies of Young men for the Advancement of Religion, by the Bishop of Norwich' 10 September 1697.



## The High Church Champions

With the advance of Queen Anne's reign opinions about the reformers of manners became increasingly entangled with the struggles dividing the nation on many issues. Even Archbishop Tenison thought it prudent to put in a good word for the reformers after Henry Sacheverell had sounded one of the High Church's attacks on the reformation movement in his *Character of a Low-Church-Man* in 1702. Here Sacheverell satirised reformation societies '*wherein every tradesman and mechanic, is to take upon him the gift of the Spirit, and to expound the difficult passages of scripture, and every justice of the peace is allowed to settle its canon, and infallibly decide what is orthodox, or heretical.*'<sup>518</sup>

The Doctor was in no doubt that the reformers constituted a hypocritical conspiracy aiming at '*the corruption of the faith, the subversion of the discipline, and the alienation of the rights, powers and privileges of the Established Church.*'<sup>519</sup> Whatever his scruples in 1699, Tenison would not leave such partisan charges standing that endeavours to reform manners were no more than the '*cant of a whore about chastity and modesty.*'<sup>520</sup> Accordingly, the Primate incorporated into his circular letter to the clergy of the diocese of St. David's (Wales was strongly Tory for all of Anne's reign) in April 1703 some praise for '*a great many religious and worthy persons in many parts of the kingdom, who do still make it their business to promote the execution of good laws*' and his hope that '*any little indiscretion which may happen among some few of them, will not be made a handle to disparage all such useful proceedings.*'<sup>521</sup>

This was faint praise given the serious threat posed by the High Church and Tory alliance's criticisms of the reformers. The acerbic Thomas Hearne must have summed up what many partisan Anglican clergy and frustrated Tory country squires felt when he characterised the reformers as '*a knavish society for carrying on rebellion and wickedness*' because of their co-operation with Dissenters and reliance on civil authority to accomplish their ends.<sup>522</sup> Hearne went on to damn clergy who encouraged the reformers. His particular bête noire here was White Kennett, who along with his patron, Sir Samuel Brewster, was an early supporter of the reformation movement and later added membership of the SPCK to his activities.<sup>523</sup> Kennett's membership of the reformation movement and his slavish support of the

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<sup>518</sup> Quoted and rebutted by Richard West in *Sacheverell's Character of a low-Church-Man replied to ... in The True Character of a Churchman* (1702), p. 36.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid.

<sup>520</sup> *Character of a Low-Church-Man* (1702), p. 2.

<sup>521</sup> *Letter to the Archdeacons and the rest of the Clergy of the Diocese of St. David's* (1703), pp. 8-9. For a High Church reply that many more things needed doing in the Church before reformation of manners, see Erasmus Saunders, *A View of the State of Religion in the Diocese of St. David's about the beginning of the Eighteenth Century* (1721, rpr. Cardiff, 1949), pp. 61-62.

<sup>522</sup> Dobel ed., *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, II, p. 74 (21 November 1707). There was a revival in the cult of the 'Royal Martyr' after Anne's accession, hence Sacheverell's and other High Churchmen's attempts to link Whigs and Dissenters with political rebellion and republicanism of the Civil War period.

<sup>523</sup> Brewster was a Whig City man and lawyer; G. V. Bennett, *White Kennett, 1660-1728* (1957), pp. 180, 184.

Low Church position in Convocation earned him the particular hatred of high-flying pamphleteers. Few readers of Alexander Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (1709) would have doubted that Kennett and other moderate clerics of a Whiggish and pro-reformation of manners hue were meant to be included in the couplet :

*Then unbelieving Priests reform'd the Nation  
And taught more pleasant methods of Salvation.*

From another quarter, too, the reformers were accused of erecting an empty formality instead of pursuing true national reformation. This time the charge was laid by Edward Stephens, who in the heady days of the early 'nineties was influential in forming the small band of gentlemen who became the First Society for Reformation. After seeing the 1699 *Account of the Societies'... in London and Westminster*, Stephens lectured the movement's members sternly:

*If you look at a **national reformation**, you must look farther and deeper than the **superficial reformation**, of suppressing vice by execution of human laws ....*

.....

*Now is the time to appear in this cause, and show yourselves men and Christians. If you, who make such pretences of a national reformation, show yourselves tristers with God and man ... what can you expect but that God and man should spew you out of the nation. I see some of you, who set up for the glory of reforming others, so far from reforming themselves that they are rather sunk deeper into that empty formality, affection and vanity, which I could not endure in so serious a work at the first ....*<sup>524</sup>

Neither the reformers, nor many other of Stephens' contemporaries, seemed to measure up to the high standards demanded by this idiosyncratic apologist for England's ancient constitution and primitive faith.

One of the least expected collisions between the London reformers of manners and their High Church critics came as a result of one of their Bow Church sermons in early 1704. The preacher, William Bisset, was later to distinguish himself in the tirade against Henry Sacheverell in 1710 as the author of the scandalmongering *Modern Fanatick*. But at the time, he was virtually unknown on the London scene of clerical politics and his ecclesiastical dignity was no more elevated than to be one of the ministers of St. Catherine by the Tower. The reformers had frankly failed in obtaining their first choice for preacher at St. Mary le Bow on 27 March 1704, and turned to Bisset, on some unknown person's recommendation, at the eleventh hour. His sermon, however, spoke more *Plain English* than either the reformers or their High Church critics cared to hear and the controversy it generated resounded both within

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<sup>524</sup> Edward Stephens, *A Seasonable and Necessary Admonition to the Gentlemen of the First Society for Reformation of manners, Concerning the Reformation of themselves, of the Bishops, and of the House of Commons* (circa. December 1701), pp. 3, 6.

the reformation movement, dividing those reformers who appreciated his candour from those who hated his presumption, and around the town since he was quickly engaged to preach twice more and *Plain English* was into its fourth edition by the end of 1704.

Bisset's sermon combined both strictures on what he perceived as the formalism and relative ineffectiveness of the capital's reformation of manners endeavours and those within the Church championing "Laudable" doctrines and practices.<sup>525</sup> That he should have mixed these matters in a reformation sermon was anathema to the movement's directors, who were, especially in Queen Anne's time, most anxious not to be seen to be meddling in affairs of Church or State. To them, Bisset's sermon completely undermined the movement's credibility, despite its claim to be above party, and put powerful ammunition into the hands of anti-reformation and anti-latitudinarian and anti-toleration forces. The Occasional Conformity Bill was then a burning issue whose heat intensified until the defeat of the 'Tack' in November 1704. Bisset's swipes at it and his charge that its supporters derived their churchmanship not from the *Book of Articles*, the *Canons*, the *Homilies*, or the *Book of Common Prayer*, but from the *Book of Sports* and *Hudibras*, was deliberately inflammatory.<sup>526</sup> To the reformers themselves he was scarcely more charitable, telling them :

*'Tis said your work seems at a stand, nay, some give out ... that there's little or nothing done now-a-days in it but hearing reformation sermons. That there is a visible abatement of success cannot be denied, unless we will give all our senses the lie.*

.....

*The fault, gentlemen, must lie at your doors; and clear yourselves of it as well as you can. I am afraid you are grown weary of well doing, and begin to faint in your minds; that you have sunk under discouragements and been ready to throw up your design as desperate.*<sup>527</sup>

The reason for the reformers' problems, Bisset continued, lay in the hypocrisy of society's rulers who gave polite praise to their motives, but who secretly feared the consequences of their zeal. In what can only have been seen as an attack on the Tory ministry of the day, Bisset charged :

*The case is this, and it cannot be hid though some think it should not be shown, but I am not of their mind. You are foully tricked and abused, you are fed with fair hopes, and amused with goodly pretences, yet nothing is done nor intended to be done in your favour, but much to oppose you. In the meantime, your money is spent; your*

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<sup>525</sup> William Bisset, *Plain English, a Sermon preached at St. Mary le Bow, on Monday March 27<sup>th</sup> 1704* (1704), p. 48. The double meaning of "Laudable" as a reference to Laudianism would not have been lost on his hearers.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46-48.

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53. This assessment is confirmed by the general tone of Woodward's *Letter from a Minister to his Parishioners* (1703).

*time wasted; your zealous endeavours scorned, hated and ridiculed; your attempts baffled; your persons affronted, insulted, assaulted; your lives threatened, and often endangered; and this not only connived at, but secretly encouraged.*<sup>528</sup>

The final calumny of the reformers' opponents, Bisset claimed, was the charge that if the reformers succeeded in controlling all vice '*we shall all become Puritans, we shall have Presbytery come in like a flood, which is as bad as the overflowing of ungodliness, and ten times worse (in some men's account) than a deluge of Popery. We shall become like our poor, sneaking beggarly northern neighbour of the other side of the Tweed.*'<sup>529</sup>

Uproar followed the delivery of *Plain English*, but Bisset published it despite the contrary pleas of many reformers and others in the audience. In his two subsequent sermons, published as *More Plain English* in June 1704, Bisset noted that the greatest rebukes he received came '*from a very few at the top ... who being most conversant with great persons, are ashamed ('tis like) of anything so ill-bred and uncourtly, as plain English.*'<sup>530</sup>

The High Flyers hounded Bisset for his approval of Moderation and co-operation with Dissent ('*a mortal sin and what they can never heartily forgive*') and were instrumental in having Bisset suspended from his country living because, in his words, '*if a man be tainted with Moderation, the greatest affronts and indignities are too good for him.*'<sup>531</sup> The furore accompanying this reformation sermon in March 1704 carried over into Defoe's *Review* in the following weeks. The *Review*'s comment columns, known as 'Advice from the Scandalous Club', gleefully reported that '*our reformers needed reforming*' since they were greatly upset by

*a parson they had desired to preach before them, who they expected would have preached a good healing discourse, to encourage reformation, and keep the world sober; and instead of this, he preached an inflaming sermon, made up from one end to the other of a certain harsh, unpleasant, and very unsuitable style, called Plain English; and they thought it their duty, in order to prevent trouble, to let the world know they disowned the man, disapproved the method, and disliked the whole sermon ....*<sup>532</sup>

The reformers of manners also came under attack from Charles Leslie's *Rehearsals* to whom those associated with Low Church or even vaguely Whiggish principles '*were like madmen throwing firebrands, and none to save the people from them for fear of being destroyed by them.*'<sup>533</sup> To Leslie's mind all moderates in politics and religion were crypto-republicans ready to seduce the populace away from monarchy

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<sup>528</sup> Bisset, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>529</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>530</sup> William Bisset' *More Plain English* (1704), sig. A3.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid., unpaginated preface.

<sup>532</sup> *Review*, 1, nos. 11 and 19 (11 April and 9 May 1704); see also no. 29 (13 June 1704).

<sup>533</sup> *Rehearsals* (6 vols., 1750), I, p. vi.

and orthodoxy. Dissent was the ally of Moderation and Low Churchmen the dupes of both. From such a vantage point, the *Rehearsal's* guns were bound to point in the direction of the reformers of manners.

In late 1706 with the Whigs again in the political ascendancy Leslie launched his attack, arguing *'we have here several societies for the reformation of manners, I would have one for the reformation of principles. It is that, and that only will reform manners; without this, the punishing of immoralities, will only make men sin more cautiously, but will never reform their minds.'* For Leslie, *'the contagion of rebellion'* was *'the most heinous of immoralities'*, and one which true reformation societies should concentrate on by fostering reverence for divinely ordained monarchy and the Anglican church. Compared to this task, *'private personal sins'* were of little consequence and it was hypocritical of the reformers of manners seemingly to concentrate on punishing them.<sup>534</sup>

When Francis Atterbury considered the pernicious tendencies of the reformers of manners, he argued very much in the same vein as Archbishop John Sharp of York who saw in the use of civil power a direct threat to the control of spiritual jurisdiction over personal conduct. Writing to the clergy of the Archdeaconry of Totnes in 1708 Atterbury, then Archdeacon of Totnes, said that the best way to revive ecclesiastical discipline was through reinvigorated rural deans and chapters. But, he cautioned,

*it hath been endeavoured, indeed, to promote the same end by other means, with which our constitution is wholly unacquainted, namely, by a voluntary erection of Societies for the Reformation of Manners.*

.....

*When we consider who have encouraged it most, and been most employed in it, we may be allowed to suspect that one end which some men have had in carrying it on was to take the inspection of manners out of their [ie the clergy's] hands to whom it most properly belongs; and by that means to render the function as useless as they could, in order to its becoming contemptible. This, indeed, together with many other steps taken to the same purpose ... gives us no very comfortable prospect of procuring any enlargement of the powers we already possess in matters appertaining to religion and virtue, or of retrieving any of those we have lost.*<sup>535</sup>

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<sup>534</sup> *Rehearsal*, no. 159 (23 November 1706). Lesley's charges were echoed Edward Ward's *Hudibras Redivivus* (2nd. ed. 1708), I, p. 1 that *'the fanatics, dissenters, moderators, whigs, low-churchmen, saints, reformers ... through their zeal to the interest of their party ... think it a hardship ... to have some of their obliterated villainies trumped up a-fresh ... when the wonderful effects of their pretended reformation, has made it so very difficult for an honest man to distinguish a howling wolf, from a true shepherd ....'*

<sup>535</sup> *Epistolary Correspondence*, II, pp. 251-252. Lesley and Atterbury would have concurred with the deprived-nonjuror Charles Dodwell that properly regulated religious societies solely of Anglicans were *'the great expedient for recovering discipline and the reformation they are so commendably zealous for. ... They are the most likely instruments in view that I know of for retrieving the independency of church power, without which religion must needs suffer under such a general defection and indifference of the laity'*; Bodl. Cherry MS 23, fol.

As Prolocutor of the Lower House of Convocation in 1711 Atterbury continued this theme in his denunciatory *Representation of the State of Religion* (printed but not presented to Queen Anne) tracing all ills to the Civil War and its progeny, '*that long and unnatural Rebellion which loosened all the bonds of discipline and order, and overturned the goodly frame of our ecclesiastical and civil constitution.*'<sup>536</sup> Such a bold statement of High Tory religious enthusiasm, however, could never gain the Bishops' approval in the Upper House. Accordingly their much reduced and platitudinous version of the *Representation* composed in May 1711 played down Atterbury's warnings about the spread of heresy and infidelity by expressly praising the efforts of societies for the reformation of manners, the erection of charity schools, promoting Christian knowledge and other causes of a latitudinarian nature.<sup>537</sup>

In the Convocation struggle, it was clear that the reformation of manners issue was a sensitive symbol to the High Church party of all that they perceived to be in danger by the growth of civil authority in moral matters and the 'dilution' of England's religious life by Dissent and compromising Anglican Moderates.<sup>538</sup> As if to confirm the High Flyers' suspicions about reformation of manners constituting an invitation to the growth of Dissent, the Godolphin-Harley administration and its mouthpiece in Defoe's *Review* used the movement to further the Union of England and Scotland in 1707.<sup>539</sup>

Defoe's change of emphasis was marked beginning in late 1706. In October of that year he was still satirising the reformers with doggerel:

*The Men of Honour must from Vice dissent, Before the Rakes and Bullies will repent; Vertue must be the Fashion of the Town, Before the Beaus and Ladies put in on.*

*The Clergy must be sober, grave and wise, Or else in vain they cant of Paradise; Our Reformation never can prevail, While Precepts govern, and Examples fail.*

*For Sin's a Slave to Custom, and will die, Whenever Habit suffers a Decay: And therefore all our Reformation here Must work upon our Shame, and not our Fear.*<sup>540</sup>

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158 (Dodwell to Charles Lesley, 1 July 1699). See also Robert Nelson, *A Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Church of England* (1704), pp. x-xii.

<sup>536</sup> Bennett, *Tory Crisis*, p. 137.

<sup>537</sup> *A Representation of the present State of Religion ... drawn up by the Upper House of Convocation* (1711), p. 4.

<sup>538</sup> For the nature of the struggle among the clerical interests see P. T. Meza, 'The Controversy in Convocation, 1701- 1711: A Study of the Church and Politics in Early Eighteenth Century England' (unpublished Ph. D. thesis, New York University, 1967).

<sup>539</sup> For the connection between *Review* and the Harley ministry see J. A. Downie, *Robert Harley and the Press* (Cambridge, 1979), chap. 3.

<sup>540</sup> *Review*, III, no. 130 (31 October 1706).

By November that year his tone had changed and he was flattering the Scots by proclaiming '*reformation of manners is certainly the glory of a nation*' and praising their '*greater victory over reigning open and authorised crime than England*' brought about by the reforming society recently begun in Edinburgh.<sup>541</sup> As the year closed, he was assuring the Scots that '*England, bad as she is, is yet a reforming nation, and ... the work of reformation has made more progress in England, from the Court even to the street, than I believe any nation in the in the world can parallel in such a time and in such circumstances*'.<sup>542</sup> By March 1707 Defoe was actually in Edinburgh canvassing the members of the Edinburgh Society for Reformation of Manners for his master Robert Harley and was admitted a member in April that year, undertaking a correspondence with the London reformers of manners on the Edinburgh Society's behalf.<sup>543</sup> One should not think, however, that Defoe's sudden conversion to the cause of moral reform was either sincere or lasting. His hatred of hypocrisy soon led him to criticise the Scottish reformers, after the Union was safely accomplished, for the same reasons he had pilloried their London counterparts for years. Writing in the *Review* in 1709 he charged '*while you punish the poor, and the rich go free, while you put the laws into the hands of men of vice to execute upon the vicious, while magistrates commit the crimes they punish, you must expect to finish no reformation in Scotland, any more than they have in England*'.<sup>544</sup>

Back in London the reformation movement stayed towards the forefront of charge and counter-charge in the party battles. John Chamberlayne (himself the secretary of the First Society for Reformation of Manners) heaped praise on the reforming societies in the first edition of *Magnae Britanniae Notitia* (formerly *Angliae Notitia*) brought out after the Union with Scotland. This pro-Whig-Dissenter-Low Church guide claimed that the societies were '*considerable both for their number and interest*', pursued perfectly legal objectives of putting the statutes into execution against immorality and profaneness, and placed the cause of true Christianity and patriotism above party by associating with '*non-establishment Protestants*' in their work.<sup>545</sup> Such praise was answered by no less a figure than Jonathan Swift. His satirical *Proposal for the Advancement of Religion and the Reformation of Manners* (1708) combined an attack on the Whig ministry's conduct of the war against Spain with one on over-precision where moral standards were concerned. Swift argued that a hypocritical conformity to the public standards of belief and behaviours was far preferable to openly practised vice, and that this was the end of a hard-line reformation of manners campaign which would only succeed in introducing an

<sup>541</sup> Ibid., no. 136 (14 November 1706).

<sup>542</sup> Ibid., no. 154 (26 December 1706). Defoe had earlier used the reformation of manners theme for purely political ends in *Legion's Memorial* (1701) against the Tory majority in the House. See also the use of the theme in the Whig pamphlet *The Elector's Right Asserted* (1701).

<sup>543</sup> C. E. Burch, 'Defoe and the Edinburgh Society for the Reformation of Manners, *Review of English Studies*, XVI (1940), pp. 306-312; see also David Macree, 'Daniel Defoe, the Church of Scotland, and the Union of 1707' *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 7 (1973), pp. 62-77.

<sup>544</sup> *Review*, VI, no. 4 (7 April 1709).

<sup>545</sup> John Chamberlayne, *Magnae Britanniae Notitia: or the Present State of Great Britain* (1708), pp. 275, 277.

'occasional conformity' of behaviour to partner the one in belief already allowed. As for the reformers themselves, their societies were according to the Dean, '*begun with excellent intention, and by persons of true piety*' but had now '*dwindled into factious clubs, and grown a trade to enrich little knavish informers of the meanest rank, such as common constables, and broken shopkeepers*'<sup>546</sup> With such odium about, it is small wonder that a letter from the London reformers to their opposite numbers in Edinburgh in April 1708 carefully requests that in the reply the Scots '*make no mention of reformation of manners on the superscription*'.<sup>547</sup>

Little could the London reformers know that 1708 was but a prelude to the storm that would break out around the pulpits used by Henry Sacheverell the next year and that they would be included in the list of the "bloody flag officer's" targets. Preaching at Derby Assizes in August 1709, the Doctor aimed his strictures against *The Communication of Sin* squarely at Dissent and its friends. Since nonconformity was a force to be reckoned with in Derby and the town's reformation society was a mixed undertaking, Sacheverell had an ideal opportunity to damn such

*illegal inquisitions, which ... are the base product of ill nature, spiritual pride, censoriousness and sanctified spleen, pretending to carry on the blessed work of reformation by lying, whispering, backbiting, and tale-bearing, the most express character of the devil, who is emphatically styled the grand accuser of the brethren; that they are busy-bodies in other men's matters, whom the apostle justly ranks with murderers, thieves, and malefactors, as the most proper persons to keep one another company ....*<sup>548</sup>

Though the preacher admitted that everyone had a Christian duty to look after his neighbour's welfare, this did not extend to continual moral censorship. '*On the other hand*', he continued:

*do not the same express injunctions of charity, religion, and justice oblige us with equal force and penalty, to the no less necessary duties of peace and quietness, forbearance and forgiveness, in mercy, compassion and good nature to cover and conceal our brother's sins and infirmities? Do not these as strictly command us not to thrust ourselves pragmatically into his business, or meddle with those concerns that do not belong to us; or under the sanctified pretence of reformation of manners, to turn informer, assume an odious and factious office, arrogantly entrench upon others' Christian liberty and innocence, and under the show of more zeal and purity (the most infallible*

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<sup>546</sup> Jonathan Swift, *A Proposal for the Advancement of Religion and the Reformation of Manners* (1708), pp 17ff.; see also M. J. Quinlan, "Swift's Project for the Advancement of Religion and the Reformation of Manners", *PMLA*, LXXI (1956), pp. 201-212

<sup>547</sup> National Library of Scotland MS 821, fols.185-186 (13 April 1708).

<sup>548</sup> Henry Sacheverell, *The Communication of Sin: A Sermon preached at the Assizes held at Derby, August 15, 1709*, (1709), p. 10.



*token of a dexterous and refined hypocrite and knave) turn the world upside down and set all mankind into quarrels and confusion?*<sup>549</sup>

The reformers of manners were seriously disturbed by this attack. Josiah Woodward's defence against it in *The Judgement of Dr. Henry Sacheverell* feared that the Highflyer's attacks at Derby, and later in St. Paul's in November when Sacheverell's violently anti-Whig sermon *Perils of False Brethren* led to his impeachment, had '*wounded the design of suppressing public vice by the execution of our laws beyond hope of recovery*'.<sup>550</sup> Ever forward in the reformation movement's defence, Woodward refuted Sacheverell's charges in turn, falling back upon Biblical arguments (see chapter 6 above, *passim*) and the claim that Archbishop Tenison's circular letter 4 April 1699 fully justified lay people co-operating with the civil magistracy by furnishing private informations about offences. In relying on Tenison's letter, Woodward could hardly have picked a weaker ally, since it was fairly well known, at least in higher clerical circles, as Archbishop Sharp said, that '*in that passage [Tenison] did not intend the setting up of formal associations under rules and articles, as are now formed in many places*'.<sup>551</sup>

Sacheverell's vitriolic pulpit performances against those who, as he alleged in his famous sermon in St. Paul's, were '*false brethren*' aiming '*to bring the Church into the Conventicle, which will more plausibly and slyly effect her ruin*', found quick reply in the pro-Whig press.<sup>552</sup> The defence of the reformers of manners in Tutchin's *Observer* is typical. With the Derby sermon particularly in mind Tutchin replied in a very orthodox manner to Sacheverell's charge against the use of informers, so orthodox that it might have been written by one of the reforming gentlemen themselves. '*Without informers*', the *Observer* wrote,

*our judges, in all criminal cases, might shut up their courts, and our Acts of Parliament against the crimes of state, or vice, would signify no more than waste paper. Every penal law carries the subject's duty of informing against the breakers of it in its bosom, and every command of the Decalogue does the like so to say, without distinction, as the Doctor does, that informers 'assume an odious and factious office', is to strike at the root of all laws, divine and human, to turn the Church and State into anarchy, and to bring the world into confusion ....*<sup>553</sup>

High Church malice in Sacheverell's mouth was particularly strong against the reformers' 'invasion' of private rights and matters. *The Observer* would have none of this, since it amounted to respecting the '*right to sin*' in the name of Christian harmony. There was nothing to the charge of private meddling, the paper claimed,

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<sup>549</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>550</sup> Woodward, *The Judgement of Dr. Henry Sacheverell* (1711) pp. 2-3.

<sup>551</sup> Sharp Papers, Box 4, Bundle R, no. 27 (Sharp to Nicholson, 27 February 1700).

<sup>552</sup> Henry Sacheverell, *The Perils of False Brethren, both in Church and State: set forth in a Sermon preached ... at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, on the 5th of November, 1709*, (1709), pp. 29-30.

<sup>553</sup> *Observer*, (5-9 November 1709).

since 'these things have not been done in corners, but in the view of the world ... and they only take up such, with the assistance of constables, as are openly guilty'. The reformers were 'worthy persons ... with a zeal like that of Phinehas' according to *The Observer*, and since everyone knew that 'many of the constables either want courage or honesty to do this of themselves, how can it be criminal in others, to associate for keeping them to their duty, and assisting them in it?' <sup>554</sup>

The passion with which High Church and Tory interests assaulted the reformation movement during the closing years of Anne's reign proved to the reformers what they had always contended, namely that, the nation's corrupt manners so poisoned Christians against each other that true union of all believers could never be accomplished without an extirpation of vice in the community. As one of their apologists wrote, 'corruption of manners has a manifest influence to widen and perpetuate our differences.'<sup>555</sup> Such divisions, they contended, played into the hands of popery, 'the chief of [whose] engines is to **divide and debauch** us; to set us together by the ears, and ruin our morals.'<sup>556</sup>

With the hope that the advent of the Hanoverians would settle differences between Christians in England, the reformers prepared *A Representation of the State of the Societies for Reformation of Manners* and offered George I a summary of their past history and objectives. The *Representation ... of the Societies* rehearsed the providential and patriarchal orientation of the reformers' practical efforts to achieve law enforcement. The situation was grave, since 'the laws that should restrain ill men lie languishing under the feet of insolent and triumphant wickedness, and the nation suffers ... the mischiefs brought upon it.'<sup>557</sup> In trying to remedy this, George I was told, the reformation movement placed itself at the service of God and the nation and wholly above all parties and interests: 'and they are so far from everything that tends to faction, or state politics, that they suffer no conversation upon public affairs at their meetings'.<sup>558</sup> Obviously stung by High Church insinuations that the movement was but a cover for aggrandizing Dissenters and compromising Churchmen, the reformers further disclaimed any wish for public recognition for their work. 'Their chief regard being to the character of virtue and serious religion', the new monarch was told, 'that their own morals may not be in any wise inconsistent with the business they undertake for the reformation of others; and that all ostentation of their zeal may be avoided, they industriously conceal their names so far as is possible.'<sup>559</sup> Whether King George was moved by this plea for 'protection and concurrence' is doubtful. He did, however, go through the motions of issuing a *Proclamation for*

<sup>554</sup> *Observer*, (12-16 November 1709).

<sup>555</sup> *The Occasional Paper*, II, no XI (1717), 'An Address to the Clergy in Relation to the Societies for Reformation of Manners', p. 18.

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>557</sup> *A Representation of the State of the Societies for Reformation of Manners, humbly offered to his Majesty* (1715, in English and French), p5.

<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*

*Promoting Piety and Virtue* at the start of his reign, but if the reformers looked to it for a new breath of life they were to be sadly mistaken. It was a flaccid and derivative document by the standards of the pronouncements of William III or even Queen Anne.<sup>560</sup>

The High Church critics of the reformation movement paled with the advent of the Hanoverians as their Tory political allies lost first favour, then office, and were routed in the constituencies. But the increasingly strong Whig ministries which followed were scarcely more sympathetic to the reformation of manners. Even the fright afforded by the abortive Jacobite rising in 1715 failed to rekindle the conjunction of foreign Catholic threats and a zeal for visible law enforcement at home which had characterised the activities of the reformers of manners in William's reign and most of Anne's. Friends of the reformation sensed the cooling of former ardour as fewer and fewer people came forward either to support the cause with funds or volunteer as informers. Robert Nelson, SPCK leader and intimate friend of the first reformers of manners, feared the consequences for future generations of this decline in enthusiasm: *'considering how far this work has been carried on against such great opposition, if it should now be laid aside or neglected, it would discourage the next age so much as to not attempt it; and then perhaps, wickedness would more abroad than ever'*.<sup>561</sup>

Nelson's fears proved justified, for the whole trend of the coming era dominated by Robert Walpole's style of government was firmly away from considerations of fundamental principles underlying the national experience and towards more pragmatic and practical, not to say expedient, approaches to the conduct of personal and national affairs. Looking back from even a few years after the death of Queen Anne, the providential impulse which had so animated the first reformers of manners looked distinctly antique. Many of the first reformers were dead or enfeebled by 1715 and newer recruits to the cause took 1688 and its changes for granted since they did not share their older colleagues' background of Civil War, Interregnum, Restoration and social crisis culminating in the flight of James II and the prolonged agonising debate on the nature of the changes which had produced it all. Though proponents of a reformation of manners, at least various of its practical aspects, certainly survived after 1715, as the century progressed their voices were fewer in number and increasingly distant from the centre of affairs, becoming eventually absorbed in the chorus of other disillusioned or disgruntled elements in the Walpole era who composed the 'country' critics of the growth of political expediency, speculation and other 'corruptions' of a government characterised by place, patronage, power and preferment.

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<sup>560</sup> *London Gazette* (5 January 1715).

<sup>561</sup> Robert Nelson, *An Address to Persons of Quality and Estate* (1715), p. 156. For the breadth of a reformation publisher's 'list' in Queen Anne's time see *A Catalogue of Books and small Tracts against Vice and Immorality* (1707) from Joseph Downing's presses.

## CONCLUSION:

### THE IDEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REFORMATION OF MANNERS MOVEMENT

*We repeat--those on the outside want to see us all on our knees. The quickest way of bringing people to their knees is to corrupt them and fill them with vice. Once this is achieved, everything is easier. One does not have to be very intelligent to realise that.*

These words could easily have been excerpted from a sermon or tract promoting reformation of manners, but in fact they come from an official publication of the Argentine government in the mid-1970s.<sup>562</sup> Though unrepresentative of today's conception of the link between deviance and the fortunes of human societies, the sentiment differs not at all from the views of late seventeenth century English reformers of manners as they perceived the dangers that vice and profaneness posed to England after 1688 against the backcloth of foreign and domestic enemies of the new order represented by William and Mary. That such literal interpretations are not solely confined to the nostalgic past should, in itself, be adequate warning against a simplistic analysis of reformation-type ideas regardless of the chronological era in which they occur. It is not surprising, therefore, that the phenomenon denoted as 'the movement for the reformation of manners' can be interpreted on several analytical planes.

At its most fundamental, the reformation movement was a practical defensive response to perceived dangers which aimed to guarantee the continuing favours of Providence which had been responsible, in the understanding of the reformers, for the fall of the corrupt James II and the establishment of William of Orange and his wife Mary. This belief in Providence was coupled with a belief in England's elect status as a nation equivalent in divine favour to biblical Israel. This provided almost limitless scriptural parallels, which were given contemporary relevance by the centuries-old tradition of seeing a direct correlation between mankind's moral behaviour and the fluctuations for good or ill on the physical environment. God's judgments would be national judgments on an un-reforming people. This, in the printing and preaching of the reformation's supporters, proved a powerful spur to those concerned to effect a visible improvement in the nation's outward behaviour.<sup>563</sup> As Bishop Edward Stillingfleet, a promoter of reformation designs, warned his royal hearers in 1691, '*when profaneness, looseness, and irreligion crept in among them and grew too hard for the government, God threatened to do such a thing in Israel at which both the ears of everyone that hears it shall tingle*'.<sup>564</sup> Such beliefs were part

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<sup>562</sup> *El Caudillo* (12 February 1975), the official organ of the Argentine Ministry of National Social Welfare.

<sup>563</sup> The tradition of national judgments is surveyed by C. Russell, 'Arguments for Religious Unity in England, 1530-1650', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 18 (1967), p. 222ff.

<sup>564</sup> Edward Stillingfleet, *A Sermon Preached before the King and Queen at Whitehall on 29 November 1691* (1692), pp. 6-7.

of the intellectual coinage of the day and sprang *'from a coherent view of the world as a moral order reflecting God's purposes and physically sensitive to the moral conduct of human beings'*.<sup>565</sup> When fuelled by the fear stemming from involvement in a war of immense proportions and not a few heart-stopping brushes with disaster after 1688, it is not surprising that these ideas took shape in the form of a campaign for more effective law enforcement to achieve a national reformation of manners.

Undoubtedly the providential tradition making a literal linkage between vice and divine punishment, virtue and national reward, was stronger in those reformers imbued with the Puritan cast of mind, among which were mainly the Dissenters but not a few Anglicans. What would be worth noting would be the absence of tracts penned by reformation supporters expounding the significance of physical events such as the earthquakes in the West Indies and London in 1692, the fire destroying Whitehall in 1699, of the Great Storm which raked across southern England in late 1703. That they did write on such matters only confirms the motivating power of providential interpretations of human events which also led them into the reformation movement.<sup>566</sup> The tincture of Puritanism and its potent belief in the literal workings of divine will in earthly affairs strongly coloured many of the foremost early reformers of manners. The Harleys stemmed from sturdy Calvinist country gentry stock, as did their distant cousin Edward Stephens, though both families became Anglican. Through Edward Harley, especially, there is a direct link with Richard Baxter and his conservative interpretation of millenarianism which marks out the younger Harley brother as *'in some ways the most deeply Puritan member of the entire family'*.<sup>567</sup> Edward's memoirs repeatedly thanked Providence for providing his *'most entirely beloved brother'* Robert and himself with *'excellent parents who from our infancy instructed and initiated us in all the principles of sincere piety and virtue.'*<sup>568</sup> These principles, and Baxter's 'middle way' in spiritual matters were to a great extent reflected in the moderate approach to political issues taken by the brothers and one can see their reflection also in the cautions the leading reformers gave against excessive zeal, the creation of religious factions, and the avoidance of legal innovations in order to achieve the goal of execution of the laws against vice and profaneness.

Other reformers of manners, such as Thomas Firmin, began as Calvinists, but in Firmin's case this moderated to a Socinianism ecumenical enough to encompass Churchmen of the stripe of John Tillotson and Edward Fowler together with a practical compassion for the principles of the Non-jurors, for whom Firmin collected

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<sup>565</sup> Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1973 ed.), p. 105. Stillingfleet (op. cit. p. 31) saw England falling to superior nations when *'luxury and debauchery and all sorts of intemperance, not only sink the reputation of a people, but effeminates and enfeebles them, and makes them careless and idle, regardless of anything but what makes for their own ease and voluptuousness'*.

<sup>566</sup> Typical is John Shower's *Practical Reflections on the late Earthquakes in Jamaica, England, Sicily, Malta, etc.* (1693, rpr. 1750).

<sup>567</sup> Angus McInnes, *Robert Harley, Puritan Politician* (1970), p. 184. See also W. M. Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium* (1979), *passim*.

<sup>568</sup> McInnes, op. cit., p. 185.

relief funds.<sup>569</sup> Even John Dunton, one of the reformation movement's principal disseminators, was 'a strong mixture of contradictions', in whom "it was not always easy to separate the Puritan from the publisher...."<sup>570</sup>

All the reformers had profound religious beliefs, whether they were the young men who acted as informers and belonged to the Anglican religious societies in London, or a discreet Non-juror such as Robert Nelson, or that more vocal stage reformer, the Rev. Jeremy Collier.<sup>571</sup> Some were sturdy country gentlemen to whom Anglican piety was more than second nature. Among these must be included Sir Richard Bulkeley whose fascination with Biblical symbolism led to his conversion to the French Prophets or 'Camisards' sect shortly before his death in 1708. Maynard Colchester, another devout squire, in company with his reforming friends Thomas Bray, Samuel Brewster and Thomas Firmin, launched the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in 1698 in the lull afforded in hostilities and national anxieties by the Peace of Ryswick.<sup>572</sup> Their intention was to give continuity through education and missionary work to the practical achievements of the reformation movement's law enforcement campaign.<sup>573</sup> If one considers only Harley, Bulkeley, Colchester and Sir John Phillips, one can find more than enough embodiments of that idealisation of so much "country" writing in the 1690s and afterwards: the pious squire and patron depicted in White Kennett's *Parochial Antiquities*, who 'by his prudence and charity, reformed a rude and licentious people'.<sup>574</sup>

One further significant factor shared by many founding fathers of the reformation movement in London was training in the law. Edward Harley, Ralph Hartley the Middlesex JP, Col. Colchester and William Yates the barrister were all legally qualified. To their number one must also add the eccentric common law author of country polemics, Edward Stephens, though his direct contact with the First Society for Reformation waned quickly after its foundation. Reverence for the laws of England undoubtedly influenced the reformers' championing of the Christian magistrate as the model for the achievement of a reformation of manners. The example of a biblical Phinehas or Samuel wielding the swords of justice and piety stemmed from Protestantism's traditional veneration for the law and its administrators and from the reformers' own early exposure to the traditions of Coke and Camden which themselves helped create within the English political nation the belief that 'the majesty and sanity and almost inexpressible complication of English

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<sup>569</sup> Thomas Birch, *Life of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson* (2nd ed., 1753), pp. 292-294.

<sup>570</sup> Philip Pinkus, *Grub Street Stripped Bare* (1968) p. 107.

<sup>571</sup> See their *DNB* memoirs.

<sup>572</sup> See Bulkeley's *DNB* memoir. A significant influence on Colchester was the example of reformation made by his father, Sir Duncomb Colchester; see Birch *op. cit.*, p. 72

<sup>573</sup> A. E. Barker, *Memorial Sketch of Col. Maynard Colchester* (1965), p. 12.

<sup>574</sup> Kennett particularly had in mind Sir William Glynne in the "Dedicatory Epistle" to *Parochial Antiquities* (1700). See also Thomas Shankland, 'Sir John Phillips and the Charity School Movement', *Transactions of the Cymmrodorion Society* (1904-05), *passim*.

*law not merely controlled but actually constituted the constitution*'.<sup>575</sup> Defending the essence of the nation expressed in its laws which were themselves imbued with Christianity's tenets lay at the heart of the reformation of manners endeavours. That defence was given urgency by external factors of political change and justification, foreign war and domestic uncertainty. The reformation of manners movement was a public phenomenon in its construction and its execution, just as the laws which it sought to reinvigorate were public, expressions of that conjunction of national genius and divine intentions which had produced the laws themselves.

Though its promoters genuinely believed that their efforts would defend religious belief as well as the temporal commonwealth from onslaughts, nevertheless, as their detractors increasingly argued during Queen Anne's time, there was an unmistakable secular thrust to their reliance on justices of the peace, lay informers, and the plethora of legal conventions associated with statute and common law prosecutions. Viewed from this perspective, the reformers of manners become, largely in spite of themselves, another expression of the neo-Machiavellian and neo-Harringtonian tradition in English political thought in which the concept of 'England' became expressed in a vision of a "*secular apocalypse*" in which the elect nation would bring forth a '*public realm, at once secular and godly, in which the individual, at once saint and Englishmen*' was to act.<sup>576</sup> In their efforts to achieve a visible reformation of England's manners through the more effective execution of the laws against immorality and profaneness, these men contributed to the '*mode of civic consciousness*' produced by the neo-Harringtonian tradition, though with the possible exception of Edward Stephens, they lacked both the vigour and clarity of secular thought that typified the '*commonwealthmen*' who composed the more intellectual strand of this '*country ideology*'.<sup>577</sup>

From the retrospective standpoint of English politics in the 1730s, it is fairly clear how the reformers' attack on corrupt manners in a literal sense could become merged into a general '*new country*' opposition critique against the '*corruption*' of the ancient balanced constitution aimed at Walpole's political management and fostered by, among others, Bolingbroke's skilful legitimising of disparate ideological strands and party allegiances in his *Craftsman* essays.<sup>578</sup> But it is essential to remember that the perspective of the early 1690s reformers of manners was much shorter than

<sup>575</sup> P. D. Avis, 'Moses and the Magistrate: A Study of the Rise of Protestant Legalism', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 26, (1975) pp. 149-172; Geoffrey Best, *Temporal Pillars: Queen Anne's Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the Church of England* (Cambridge, 1964), p. 37. For the identification of the ancient constitution with common law and custom see J. G. A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (New York, 1967), chaps. 2-3.

<sup>576</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton, 1975), p. 337; see also Pocock's "Machiavelli, Harrington and English political Ideologies in the Eighteenth Century" in *Politics, Language and Time* (1973 ed.), pp. 104-147.

<sup>577</sup> Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth Century Commonwealthman* (New York, 1968), chap. 1. For the constituents of 'country ideology' see H. T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property* (1979), chap. 3.

<sup>578</sup> M. M. Goldsmith, 'Faction Detected: Ideological Consequences of Robert Walpole's Decline and Fall', *History*, 64 (1979), pp. 1-19; H. T. Dickinson, *Bolingbroke* (1970), pp. 184-211 and 'The Eighteenth Century Debate on the Glorious Revolution', *History*, 61 (1976), pp. 37-38.

this. Indeed, they felt that if they hesitated in putting their beliefs into action, then there would be no future for England at all. One must be wary, therefore, of placing too much emphasis on the reformation of manners movement's importance for long term developments in political ideology. By the 1730s most of the original reformers were dead and the context which had fuelled their efforts was much altered.

The reformation's models of well-regulated parishes composed of pious Christian households was largely agrarian in derivation and more of an impediment than an asset when confronting the corrupt manners of burgeoning London. Nevertheless these models provided the standards by which the reformers identified the problems to be solved by law enforcement and the methods through which London's citizens, and by implication all the nation, could be reclaimed. The reformers' belief that standards of public moral life had declined since Queen Elizabeth's time may have been sharpened by their perception that basic factors contributing to national strength, such as public health standards and individual lifespans were lower in their century than in the previous '*golden age*' of the sixteenth century.<sup>579</sup> This could have added weight to their desire to rescue the ancient vigour and piety of society from its contemporary dangers, a desire made more incumbent by the fact that probably 40% of the population around the end of the seventeenth century was under fifteen years of age and thus in need of a correspondingly large measure of proper training in the principles of belief and obligation which supported a society operating through patriarchal hierarchies in household and political nation.<sup>580</sup>

The mushrooming of London, as much as the threat of French invasions, presented clear and present dangers to the reformers' vision of a stable, pious and harmonious society. If London was expanding in the later seventeenth century by some 8,000 persons annually and had visibly grown from around 200 thousand in 1600 to over 575 thousand by 1700, then the implications for social control and bureaucratic effectiveness would have been obvious.<sup>581</sup> The vast London out-parishes, such as Josiah Woodward's Poplar, were under-policed and largely unserved by the ecclesiastical network, while being the fastest growing parts of the capital. Suburban sprawl, especially east and northeast of the City, contributed to the jerry-building and overcrowding of existing habitations necessary to house London's growing and often volatile '*floating population*' existing off the river trade, central industries such as tanning, brewing and textiles, and petty crime and prostitution connected with '*sanctuaries*' such as Whitefriars.<sup>582</sup> Many more people than just the reformers of manners recognised in this pattern of growth the forces which threatened to

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<sup>579</sup> Leslie Clarkson, *Death, Disease and Famine in Pre-Industrial England* (Dublin, 1975), pp. 12-14.

<sup>580</sup> Leslie Clarkson, *The Pre-Industrial Economy in England, 1500-1750* (1971), p. 236; Schochet, *Patriarchalism in Political Thought*, chap. 4.

<sup>581</sup> *Ibid.*, p 20; E. A. Wrigley, 'A Simple Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy, 1650-1750', *Past and Present*, No. 37 (1967), *passim*.

<sup>582</sup> M. J. Power, 'East London Housing in the Seventeenth Century' in P. Clark and P. Slack, eds., *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700*, (1972), p. 237ff; R. L. Brow, 'The Mintners of Wapping: The History of a Debtors Sanctuary in Eighteenth Century London', *East London Papers*, 14 (1972), pp. 77-86.



undermine the existence and influence of model Christian households in which parents and masters should instruct their children, servants and apprentices in 'good manners'.<sup>583</sup> Demographers of late seventeenth century London have argued for a real justification for the lament, often seen in reformation of manners sermons and tracts, about the decline in such households. One reason for this may be the shortfall seen in baptisms recorded in parish registers as compared to the numbers of births probably occurring, even in relatively affluent London parishes.<sup>584</sup> This would mean that many young persons, especially in the out-parishes, were not being picked up by the first sweep of the net, so to speak, designed to bind them to the accepted conventions of religious and social life through their socialisation in the Christian household, which should itself be a microcosm of a larger community practising 'reformed manners.'

The reformers of manners perceived the social reality implicit in William Camden's dictum that '*between religion and the commonwealth there can be no separation*' and their attempts to hold this unified belief system together through a respect for religion and proper behaviour brought about by effective law enforcement was a perfectly rational response. In fairness, they did admit that finding the ideal balance in the application of the force of the laws was very difficult. Certainly some reformers were aware, as modern sociologists are, that some forms of social control can create their own deviance in response.<sup>585</sup> As several reformation preachers, mainly Dissenters, cautioned, excess moral rigour directed at ordinary people was counterproductive and caused them to '*break out into unknown and uncommon wickedness, by shutting up all the avenues of common sins*'.<sup>586</sup> But the opposite, too, had to be avoided where, as Shakespeare warned:

*strict statutes and most biting laws,  
... not in use, in time the rod  
Becomes more mocked than feared;  
so our decrees,  
Dead to infliction, to themselves are dead,  
And liberty plucks justice by the nose;  
The baby beats the nurse, and quite athwart  
Goes all decorum.*<sup>587</sup>

Non-enforcement of the laws - in time of war – that upheld piety and good manners could, as the reformers warned, lead directly to national weakness and ultimately military defeat and humiliation.<sup>588</sup>

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<sup>583</sup> George, *London Life*, chap. 2, *passim*.

<sup>584</sup> *London Inhabitants Within the Walls, 1695*, intro. D. V. Glass, (1966), pp. xxxv ff.

<sup>585</sup> See the arguments about the creation of deviance in Edwin Lemert, *Human Deviance, Social Problems, And Social Control* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1967) and Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (1972).

<sup>586</sup> Isaac Watts, *A Sermon Preached for Reformation of Manners at Salters Hall* (1707), p. 21. See also the reformation sermons of dissenting ministers Thomas Freke (1704), p. 38 and Benjamin Gravener (1705), p. 43.

<sup>587</sup> *Measure for Measure*, I, iii, 19ff.

In the final analysis, the motivating beliefs of the reformation's supporters fell, however imperfectly, within that broad tradition of social and political thought which can be labelled 'country ideology', though separating it into its distinct strands in any one era sometimes sacrifices the vitality of the whole. In some ways its emphasis on virtue and the regulation of the community according to moral precepts embodied in the laws and enforced by men independent of the temptations of place and corruption was best suited for the rural parish, or the city-state of Machiavelli or Savanarola, or the utopia of Harrington's *Oceana*, or even the self-contained polity of the Isle of Man.<sup>589</sup> Late 17<sup>th</sup> century London was none of these, but rather the burgeoning capital of an increasingly commercialised and secularised nation-state just as prone, as country ideologists thought, to as many 'corruptions' in its constitutional and administrative make-up, as its citizens were to allurements to vice and disrespect for religion.

Though this country sentiment did not coalesce into an effective political party, it nevertheless strongly influenced 'backbench' opinion in and out of Parliament at many times during the later seventeenth and into the eighteenth centuries. A man could be a Whig on some issues and a Tory on others, and still be consistently 'country' in orientation by claiming to place loyalty to the nation and its ancient and balanced constitution above mere party concerns. Thus one can see Archdeacon Robert Booth of Durham working closely with his Tory superior Bishop Crewe to promote reforming societies in the diocese while the Archdeacon busied himself canvassing the support of Whig magnates such as Lords Warrington and Say and Sele for their endorsements of the 1699 *Account of the Societies for Reformation 29 of Manners in London and Westminster*.<sup>590</sup> A short time earlier Booth had lamented to the SPCK that it was the entrenched opposition to reformation among some of the administration's supporters which had frustrated more reformation legislation in the wake of the 1698 *Act against Swearing*. He was sure that '*the Court Party were the great opposers of Sir John Phillips' good designs in the last sessions of Parliament*'.<sup>591</sup>

This country mentality was the same that prompted Edward Harley to rejoice after the Peace of Ryswick that his brother Robert had been instrumental in reducing the size of the standing army because of its threat to English liberties and the balanced constitution in the hands of an administration that was not properly checked by independent men who stood for the basic principles underpinning the nation.<sup>592</sup> This

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<sup>588</sup> Josiah Woodward, *An Address to the Officers and Seamen Of Her Majesty's Royal Navy* (circa. 1702) and *The Miseries and Vices of the French cause them to the Bad Soldiers* (circa. 1710), an engraving attributing Marlborough's victories in part to the debauched and servile nature of Frenchmen under Louis XIV.

<sup>589</sup> For the Isle of Man as a microcosm of reformation under a unified ecclesiastical and temporal jurisdiction see Hugh Stowell, *The Life of the Rt. Rev. Thomas Wilson, late Bishop of Sodor and Man* (2nd ed., 1888). chap. 8.

<sup>590</sup> SPCK Archives, CR2/1, no. 96 (3 May 1700).

<sup>591</sup> Wanley MSS, p. 130.

<sup>592</sup> McInnes, *Robert Harley*, p. 185. For the hostility against standing armies in country thought see L. G. Schworer, *'No Standing Armies': the anti-army ideology in seventeenth-century England* (Baltimore, 1975).

melding of reformation with 'country ideology' can also be detected in some election pamphlets in which voters were urged to

*choose not vicious and debauched persons; men who give themselves up to pleasure and luxury; such as these are not regular enough to be law makers; and besides (should they wish well to your interests) they are commonly idle, and will loose [sic] it rather than their pleasure.*<sup>593</sup>

There is a strain of 'radical fundamentalism' about this message which found many echoes in propaganda written to further the reformation of manners movement.

The final paradox to be drawn in detailing the movement's championing of a reinvigoration of moral standards through the better execution of the laws against immorality and profaneness is that the greatest, and in the long run most successful, challenge did not come from the 'court' or administrative section of the 'court versus country' dichotomy. It came, rather, from the impetus provided by the growth of a pluralised and commercially-orientated society centred in London and the other urban centres and gradually spreading its influence throughout the nation. The most persuasive of its early eighteenth century apologists was Bernard Mandeville, the *bête noir* of the reformers of manners. Mandeville argued frankly that some immorality was indispensable for society's material advancement and that the vision of a reformed society dear to the hearts of Bulkeley, Colchester, Bray, Firmin and the rest was an illusion:

*T'enjoy the World's Conveniences  
Be famed in War, yet live in Ease  
Without great Vices, is a vain  
Eutopia seated in the Brain  
Fraud, Luxury and Pride must live  
Whilst we the Benefits receive.*

.....

*Bare Virtue can't make Nations live in Splendour....*<sup>594</sup>

The reformers of manners, and 'country ideology' in general, presented a clear alternative to this view of society, though within the confines of the 1688-1715 period there were extraordinary circumstances against which this was depicted. But however wicked they were, God did not intervene to destroy his chosen people, and Louis XIV his erstwhile 'avenging angel' stayed safely on the other side of the Channel despite several Jacobite forays to and from St. Germain after 1715.

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<sup>593</sup> *A Memento to all Freeholders and Electors of Parliamentmen* (1689). For an examination of the virtue against commercial society theme see E. A. and L. D. Bloom, *Joseph Addison's Sociable Animal* (Providence, 1971), *passim*.

<sup>594</sup> From 'the moral' to Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* (1714) in P. Harth's edition (1970), p. 76.

As this contradictory reality ate away like acid at the providential explanation of the reformers' sense of urgency, the movement's supporters became increasingly vulnerable to the party alignments battling for control in Anne's reign and, with the increasing Whig domination following the arrival of the Hanoverians, contributing to the construction of the "Robinocracy" of the 1720s and later. Take away the external framework of war, fear and the urgent necessity to rationalise recent and dramatic political change in the Revolution of 1688 while retaining a social order based on deference and hierarchy and respect for religiously derived moral codes, and the movement for the reformation of manners quickly loses its internal driving force. In the less highly charged climate after 1715, it slowly merged, not even as the most significant element, into the amorphous reservoir of 'country sentiment' waiting to be moulded by politicians of differing opposition intentions who wished to attack the alleged 'corruptions' of those wielding administrative power.

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## POSTSCRIPT

### **Note for researchers interested in the movement for the reformation of manners 1688-1715 and afterwards.**

Since this thesis was completed in 1980, a number of other investigators have used it and its sources in their own work. It is gratifying to know that this work has helped others move our understanding of this period forward.

This note is based on casual online searching reflecting some of the later work in which the thesis has been used. It is far from exhaustive, but at least it is somewhere to start for anyone interested in pursuing the subject.

I had detailed correspondence with Robert Shoemaker, Sheffield University, in the preparation of his CUP monograph *Prosecution and Punishment*, based on his 1986 Stanford PhD thesis, about the organisation of the societies and their campaigning methods, particularly towards the judicial authorities and their response to prosecutions brought by informers associated with the reformation societies in London. See Shoemaker's

- ***Prosecution and Punishment: Petty Crime and the Law in London and Rural Middlesex C1660-1725*** (Cambridge, 1991). See p xv and chapter 9. pp 238-52.
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